

# The Big Four and the Wizarding School

by Floranagirl

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Summary: A princess from the Highlands, a girl with the longest hair, a viking from a land with dragons, and a poor boy who just wants to have fun. Four lives brought together by the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Are the students destined to find friends or foes on this enchanted journey? A Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons Hogwarts AU. Human!Jack. No pairings...yet.

## 1. Prologue

**\*\*This fic was inspired by a picture on Deviant Art, called Mischief Managed, which itself was inspired by another Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons Harry Potter AU.\*\***

**\*\*Rise of the Guardians and How to Train Your Dragon belong to Dreamworks. Brave and Tangled belong to Disney.\*\***

**\*\*I don't own any of the quotes from the four movies. Cross-posted on Archive of Our Own\*\***

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Prologue<strong>

"\_This is the story of how I died"-E\_

"\_It is not! It's about destiny. They say our destiny is tied to the land\_â€"\_"\_\_-M\_

"\_Oh shut up Merida. For a long time, darkness was the first thing I could remember\_â€"\_"\_\_-J\_

"\_Jack Frost, will you quit interrupting\_\_!"-M\_

"\_You started it; you interrupted Eugene."-\_\_J\_

"\_Hey, Don't I get a say in this?"-E\_

"\_N\_\_O\_\_!"\_ â€"M+J\_

"\_This is BERK\_\_"\_\_ â€"H\_

"\_It is not. It's Scotland, and it's about destiny\_\_!"- M\_

"\_Guys! Guys! This story isn't about any of that!"\_\_ â€"R\_

"\_Then what DO you think it's about Rapunzel?"\_\_-H\_

"\_Itsâ€|it's about us, the four of us. About our hopes, our dreams, our memories and all of our destinies."\_\_ â€"R\_

"\_Hey, don't I get in there? Nah, just kidding, I know this story isn't mine."\_ â€"E\_

"\_But how can we narrate if it's about all of us?"\_\_ â€"M\_

"\_We can take turns."-\_\_R\_

"\_Alright, you lead the way."-\_\_J\_

"\_Eugene!"\_\_ -R\_

\_ "As I was saying, this is the story of how I died, but don't let that get you down. It's actually a fun story, has to be, with Frost in it, and it isn't even mine. No, this story belongs to Hiccup, Rapunzel, Merida, and Jack Frost. It's the story of how they all met, and how they went to Hogwarts and saved the world, but I'm getting ahead of myself. Going back!\_

\_ "Now, you've probably heard our separate tales, so I'm betting you know that a drop of sunlight once fell and it had healing powers, it was kept by Mother Gothel etc, etc. etc. So I'm going to stick to telling you what you don't know.\_

"\_Near the flower a kingdom sprang up. It was ruled by a young witch and wizard, a benevolent pair, they were loved by all; muggles and magic alike. Well, the queen got sick and she ate the magic flower before giving birth to Rapunzel. \_

"\_Now the story goes that Mother Gothel kidnapped Rapunzel, but that was not quite how it happened. Mother Gothel did \_\_try\_\_ to kidnap the baby, but the palace guards caught up to her. In a moment of brilliance, Mother Gothel lied to the captain of the guard. She said she had intercepted the real kidnapper and was trying to return the child.\_

\_ "The guard brought Gothel before the king. The king was so grateful to have his child back he believed her story. Mother Gothel told him of the child's magic hair and warned him that others would try to take her. It took a lot of persuasion but Gothel convinced him that she knew a safe place to raise Rapunzel where no one would ever find out about her hair.\_

\_ "The king and queen were sad to part with their daughter, but they were afraid of losing her for real, so they allowed mother Gothel to take the child to a tower in a secluded glen.\_

\_ "They started the rumor of the lost princess, letting their subjects believe that Rapunzel really was missing, and every year on Rapunzel's birthday they would send out thousands of lanterns to let their child know they were thinking of her, and hope that one day it would be safe for her to come home.\_

\_ "Deep within the woods Mother Gothel was to raise the child until she could control her magic, or until she was accepted into a wizarding school. For only after Rapunzel had full control would she be able to go home.\_

\* \* \*

><p><em>"Darkness. For the last 300 years that was all I could remember, but then the Moon told me I was a guardian and the Tooth Fairy and Baby Tooth helped me remember my real past. Because we were pressed for time during the battle I only got the most necessary memories, but after the fight was over and things relaxed Tooth helped me to unlock deeper memories, memories from my childhood, memories of my friends, Merida, Hiccup, and Rapunzel. Memories from when I was alive and lived with my mother and sister in England. And my life at Hogwarts, around eight hundred years ago, before the wizarding world became a secret.<em>

\* \* \*

><p><em>"This is Berk. But you probably know that. We have a bit of a pest problem. This is my village, every resident a wand and ax wielding Viking-wizard, for seven generations straight. My name is Hiccup. Every Viking on Berk is expected to be a great wizard and a great warrior. At the age of eleven, every Viking child gets shipped off to Durmstrang to learn magic. This year it's my turn. There's just one little problem. I have never cast a spell in my life.<em>

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>Some say our destiny is tied to the land. Others say it is woven together like a cloth. From the time I was very young I had been told that I was the Princess. That it was my destiny toâ€|toâ€|well to be my mother. Butâ€|there are events in one's life that can change your destinyâ€|as I was soon to find out."<em>

## 2. The Acceptance Letters

### The Acceptance Letters

Merida galloped home on Angus, urging him faster as the castle came into sight the wind blowing her curly red hair. The ten-year-old princess entered the courtyard and guided her horse to the stables. As she dismounted, Merida's dress caught on the saddle and tore her skirt.

"Ugh! Angus, if Mum sees this she won't let me go riding for a month." The big black horse whinnied as though he understood. Merida glanced down; the tear was rather low, if she stayed in the shadows Mum might not notice. As Merida was contemplating the swiftest route to her room she heard her nursemaid Maudie calling for her.

"MERIDA! MeridaMeridaMerida!" The nurse cried as she bounced around the courtyard.

"I'm right here, Maudie." Merida said, careful to keep half a fence between herself and the nurse.

"Merida, thank goodness, I've been looking for you for hours. Your mother wants to see you."

"Oh, what about?"

"I'm not sure, but it has to do with a letter she received." Maudie grabbed Merida's hand and dragged her out of the stable to the great hall. Merida quickly snatched an apple as they passed through the kitchen, forgetting about the tear in her dress.

Queen Elinor and King Fergus were standing at the table when Merida and Maudie entered. Elinor smiled at her daughter.

"You found her, finally." The queen said.

"Out on that horse of hers again." The nurse said.

"Thank you, Maudie, why don't you go help in the kitchen now; we need to discuss something in private with Merida."

With a bow, Maudie left leaving Merida alone with her parents.

"So, what's this I hear about a letter?"

"Merida, as you know, your father and I are rulers of this land, as such we have been aware for quite some time of different individuals."

"Different?" Merida questioned moving closer to her parents.

"When the tribes united and made your father King, we were approached by a strange man who said he was from the government for wizards and witches."

"That's interesting. But what's this got to do with me?"

"Keep listening, Merida." Queen Elinor said, "The man told us that there were several wizards and witches around Scotland, there was even a school for them. He said he would only contact us if there were an emergency that involved what did he call us?"

"Muggles?" King Fergus supplied.

"Ah, that was it. He would only contact us if it involved muggles."

"That's a nice story mum, But I though dad didn't believe in magic."

"I didn't until I saw that man cast a spell right here in the great hall." King Fergus shivered. Elinor shook her head and continued talking to Merida.

"Merida, a witch came today to give you a letter."

"A witch?! Here, in Castle Dunbroch? Where is she?"

"She waited an hour, but when we couldn't find you she said she had others to visit. Since she was sure we understood the wizarding world, she left."

"What did she want?"

"It's in the letter. Go on and read it" Elinor handed her daughter a sealed envelope with green ink.

Princess Merida of Dunbroch

The northern wing of the Castle Dunbroch

Scotland

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Headmaster: Finnegan Ombric

(Order of Merlin 2nd class)

Dear Merida of Dunbroch,

We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.

Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 July.

Yours Sincerely,

Wilhelm Grimm

Wilhelm Grimm

Deputy Headmaster

"What does this mean, Mum?"

"Merida, it means you're a witch."

\* \* \*

><p>Jackson Overland Frost ran after his four year-old sister, Emma Pippa Frost. She giggled as he caught her.<p>

"Can't get away from me," the eleven-year-old said as he swung his sister into a tight hug.

"Jack, I can't breathe," She squeaked. Jack loosened his grip and set her down.

"Jack!" A woman's voice called out into the forest.

"Uh oh, sounds like mom is looking for you. You're in trouble," the little girl said.

"But I haven't done anythingâ€¦today at least. We better get back to the house. Come on, I'll race you." The children laughed as they began the race, Jack making sure to keep his pace slow enough that his sister was always in sight. As they neared the house Jack slowed down so they hit the doorway at the same time.

"I win! I win! I win!" Emma said.

"Oh come on, that was a tie if I ever saw one." Jack replied laughing as they entered the house.

As his eyes adjusted to the dim one-room cottage he was surprised to notice his mother was not alone. Standing next to her was a short woman with wild grey hair tied back with a long hooked nose.

"Hey mom, who's this?"

"Jack, dear, this isâ€¦what did you say your name was?"

"Eve Hallows." The woman cackled, "I'm a witch."

Jack stared at the woman intently, finally letting out a burst of laughter, "Yeah, and I'm the Easter Bunny."

"Are you? Then I've come to the wrong house." Eve said.

"No, no, he was only joking." Jack's mother said giving him a disapproving scowl.

"Sorry," Jack said, "I thought you'd laugh."

"One should never laugh at the Easter Bunny, child. I haven't met him myself, but I hear he's an Animagus."

"A what?"

"A wizard who can change himself into an animal at will."

"Soâ€¦you weren't joking when you said you were a witch?"

"Not at all," the witch smiled and pulled out a wand. With a small wave and a whisper of words Jack didn't understand the wood table started to float. Jack's jaw dropped.

"Ok, I'm starting to believe you." The witch chuckled.

"You should, you're a wizard." Jack had been staring at the table but as soon as the witch's words registered he turned back to her.

"How can that be? Mother, are you a witch?" His mother shook her head, pulling his sister away from the table.

"No child, I only visit children who do not live with or know of any relatives from the wizarding world.

"So you just go around saying, 'Hey! You've got magic, have a nice life'?" Eve smiled and lowered the table.

"That's the idea. But there's more than just being magic, which is

the real reason I'm here. I have a letter for you." Then she flicked her wand and an envelope with green ink appear in front of her. Jack reached out and took the letter.

"To Jackson Overland Frostâ€¦ the straw mat by the hearth, the little cottage in the woods, Burgess, Dorset, England." Jack read out loud as he opened the envelope, "We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment. Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 Julyâ€¦"

Jack stared at the letter as he finished reading. His mother stepped forward and put her hand on Jack's shoulder.

"Jack?" She said quietly.

"Is this real? You're not joking?"

"Afraid not," the witch said.

"School ... I didn't think I'd ever â€¦ can I really go, Mother?"

"Oh, Jack," the woman hugged her son, "I want you to be happy so much."

Jack jumped away with a smile almost as big as his face. He ran to his sister, "Did you hear that! I'm going to be a wizard!"

Jack bounced around the room, running from his sister to the witch back to his mother before he stopped to reread the letter. As he reread the letter his face fell, he reached back into the envelope and pulled out a list of school supplies.

"What's wrong, Jack?" Eve asked.

"These school suppliesâ€¦we can't pay for them, can we? And the school's tuitionâ€¦I can't go."

"First off there is no tuition." Eve said, "The wizarding world government pays for the school, and graduating wizards and witches often donate money. As for the supplies, there is a fund for students with little money of their own. It's not much, so you may have to buy some of the supplies used, but it should be able to get you everything on that list."

"Does that mean I can go?" Jack asked.

Jack's mother smiled. Jack ran over and hugged her, "Ok, when do I leave?"

"Slow down. They need your reply first. Shall I tell them you accept?" Eve asked. Jack nodded.

"Then you'll need to plan a trip to Diagon Alley in London before September 1st."

"You say this place is in London? That's over two hundred miles away. It would take a week to get there. How would we even find

thisâ€|Alley place?" Jack's mother asked.

"I have temporally connected your fireplace to the Floo network. You take a pinch of Floo powder, step into the fireplace and say 'Diagon Alley' the fireplace does the rest of the work. The fireplace will disconnect on 2 September. Diagon Alley will be filled with other witches and wizards. They will be able to ensure you get the proper supplies and answer any questions you might think of."

"One last thing," Jack said, "How do I get the money from that fund?"

"There is a bank in Diagon Alley called Gringotts. I will put your name on the list of recipients, and they will give you a bag of coins to be used for these supplies. Here's the key." Eve pulled out a large copper key and handed it to Jack. "You'll have to give the goblins that key and your name. Now I must run, there are other students to visit, you know. Here's some Floo power. Watch me."

The witch took a handful of Floo powder and stepped into the fireplace. She threw it down and said quite loudly "Diagon Alley" A green flame erupted and seemed to swallow the witch.

Jack stared after her, then turned to his mother, "So, when do we leave for Diagon Alley?"

\* \* \*

><p>Eleven-year-old Rapunzel looked wistfully out her window as she brushed her long blonde hair. As she gazed out at the waterfall by the tower she noticed an owl, out in broad daylight. Thinking it was strange she set down her brush to look at it more intently. The owl came closer.<p>

Quickly Rapunzel pulled out her notebook and started to sketch the owl before it flew away. As it drew nearer she noticed it had something in its claws. She gave an excited screamed as it dropped the paper through her window.

"Rapunzel!" a black haired woman said coming into the room, "What's wrong?"

"Mother, I saw an owl, it gave me a letter." Rapunzel ran over to where the letter landed.

To Princess Rapunzel of Corona,

The highest room in the tower in the glen,

Kingdom of Corona.

"This isn't from my real parents." Rapunzel stated turning the letter over in her hand.

"No. It's from that school. It means that you're a witch just like your parents."

"I knew I was a witch, that's why my hair glows isn't it?" Rapunzel said as she opened her envelope.



"No, your hair glowing is a result of your mother being a witch. She was messing around with potions before you were born. If she hadn't drunk that potion you would be an ordinary witch without magic hair. It's because of her you have to stay hidden in this tower."

"Oh," Rapunzel responded as she flipped open the parchment and read the letter inside, "Acceptedâ€|term begins 1 Septemberâ€|"

Rapunzel paused and looked up at Mother Gothel, "Does this mean I can leave the tower?"

Gothel scowled, "You don't have to, Rapunzel. Your parents entrusted me to keep you safe from the outside world. It's a cruel dark place out there. It's dangerous. You can stay here forever if you want to."

"Butâ€|this letter, I mean, I could learn magic? I could be like mother and father, and go outside my tower."

"Your parents let me hide you in this tower until you were old enough to go to wizarding school. They felt you would be safe enough at the school, but I fear they may have misjudged. I don't want to see you get hurt. Stay here Rapunzel, stay with me."

"I love you, Mother Gothel, I do, but I've wanted to learn magic like my parents for so long, please let me."

"You know I don't like this Rapunzel," Mother Gothel paused, "But I don't suppose I can keep you here if you want to go, your parents would sic the entire army on me."

"Oh thank you Mother Gothel." Rapunzel said racing to hug her. Gothel hugged the child back, tilting her head to kiss her hair.

"If you don't like it at school, you can always come back, you know. And you must keep your hair secret. Just because they are wizards doesn't mean the other students won't want to use your hair."

"I will, Mother Gothel. I promise. When do I get these supplies?"

"I will get your supplies, you just think over whether or not you want to goâ€|tell me the instant you change your mind."

"I won't change my mind, I'm sure."

"Just keep thinking that, you have about a month before school starts."

"I'm going to this magic school; I'm going to see the world outside my tower!"

\* \* \*

><p>"Hiccup!" Stoick the Vast bellowed. A small scrawny eleven-year-old boy ran up.<p>

"Yes dad?" The boy said looking at his feet.

"Hiccup, as you know, most of us here on Berk can do decent magic."

"Yes dad, I know, I've tried to do those spells. I just can't seem to get itâ€¦"

"You realize of course, that when a wizard is born he's enrolled in a magical school. Of all the boys on the island you were the only one not to get an acceptance letter from Durmstrang." Hiccup breathed out. He'd known for a long time that he wasn't good at magic, but until today he always held out hope that he wasn't a squibâ€¦but now... Hiccup was stirred from his thoughts by his dad chuckling. Stoick was always disappointed in him, wasn't he? Why would he be happy that Hiccup wasn't a wizard?

"Are youâ€¦happy, Dad?"

"You bet I am, you didn't get a letter from Durmstrang, but you got one from Hogwarts!"

"Hogwarts?! No way!" Hiccup said as a small smile crept onto his face. His dad handed him the envelope written in green ink. Hiccup opened it and looked the letter over. Sure enough he'd been accepted.

"Hiccup, we're going to have to go somewhere new to get your supplies, the shops in town only sell Drumstang robes. Does the letter say where to get your supplies?"

Hiccup looked at the second page, "Ah, right here, in Diagon Alley, London England."

"London, no one from Berk has gone to London in over a century, not since Uric the Oddball. Now the only question is how should we get there? Boats or Floo powder?"

"But we never use Floo powder," Hiccup said.

"Only on special occasions. I'd say your acceptance letter qualifies as a special occasion." Stoick lifted Hiccup up in a tight bear hug and spun him around a few times, "So when do you want to go, Hiccup?"

### 3. Diagon Alley

\*\*I forgot to say this before, The wizarding world belongs to J.K. Rowling\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Diagon Alley<strong>

"Merida! Get back here!" Queen Elinor called to the redhead. Merida ran from shop to shop taking everything in. Elinor chased after the curly-haired princess, grabbing her hand, stopping her from entering the Quidditch supplies store, "Merida, the letter specifies no brooms."

"But Muuum?" Merida pleaded.

"No buts Merida! Look, you love Angus right? How do you think he'd

feel if you never rode him again because you had a broom? At least see how you like flying before you rush off and waste all our money on a broom."

Merida sighed and stepped away from the shop, "Fine, then where should we go first?"

"We've already traded our money at the bank. The first thing on the list is the uniform, now if only we can find the clothing store."

"I see it, Mum!" Merida ran off dragging her mother behind her.

\* \* \*

><p>"Wow!" was all Jack Frost could say as he took in the enormous bank in front of him. Swallowing hard, his mother dragged Jack and Emma up the steps to the main entrance. Jack couldn't help but stare at the mass of people, it seemed as though the whole town was inside the bank, but the strangest thing about it were the tiny green men sitting high up on stools. Goblins, Jack thought. His mother dragged him up to the open register.<p>

"Can I help you?" the goblin asked.

"Um, yesâ€|you see?" His mother started nervously, "This is my son, Jackson Overland Frost, we were told there was a fund here. Jack, give him the key."

As his mother was speaking Jack's attention drifted off to the other patrons of the bank, a large redheaded gentleman wearing a horned hat and a scrawny boy next to him catching his eye the most. Feeling his mother staring intently at him, Jack handed the key up to a very boney goblin hand.

"Ah yes, Jackson Frost, we have a package for you." The goblin reached behind the desk and pulled out a small bundle, "Inside you will find your allotted coins as well as a guide on what each is worth, a budget to help you estimate how much things should cost, and a list of where to find the best prices in Diagon Alley."

"Thank you." Jack's mother said taking the package and turning away from the goblin. As the family of three exited the building, Jack again noticed the giant redhead and small boy. The boy gave him a slight nod and walked over.

"Soâ€|are you heading to Hogwarts too?" the small boy asked.

"Um, yeah." Jack said. He glanced at his mother. She was busy reading the money conversion chart "I take it you're a student?"

"Not yet." The boy admitted, "I'll be the first of my family to go to Hogwarts."

"Hiccup!" The large man said coming over. Jack's mother quickly tucked her daughter behind her.

"Hiccup?" Jack said laughing. Hiccup's face turned red.

"It's my nameâ€|" Hiccup said softly, "it's not the worst."

"I'm sorry." Jack said toning down his laughter, "It just seemed really weird, you know, to see such a big man saying Hiccup. My name is Jack Frost"

"Jack!" Jack's mother said, "Let's go get your robes."

"You are getting robes?" Hiccups dad asked, "We're getting robes too, Hiccup, why don't you invite your new friend to go to that new robe shop with us?"

"Well, you heard my dad, want to come with us?" Jack looked at his mother who was shaking her head.

"Thanks, but I don't think we're going to get my robes there." Jack said.

"Oh well. Maybe I'll see you on the Hogwarts Express," Hiccup said as he turned to go.

"Yeah, I hope." Jack said as he watched Hiccup and his dad enter the robe shop, "So, Mother, where are we getting my robes?"

"There's a secondhand robe shop further down, we're going there. Come along." Mrs. Frost grabbed her son's and daughter's hands and led them around Diagon Alley.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup watched out the window as Jack and his family headed down the alley. The boy looked nice enough; Hiccup hoped his father hadn't scared them off. For a Viking, Stoick was quite normal; but here among the Londoners he seemed out of place.<p>

Hiccup was drawn from his thoughts as a young girl and her mother came out of the fitting rooms. The girl caught his attention immediately; it was hard to miss a mob of curly red hair. Her hair seemed even redder than Stoick's, and definitely bushier.

"Now wait here Merida, while I go pay the seamstress." The girl's black haired mother said.

"New robes?" Hiccup asked.

"Oh, aye." The girl said. Hiccup smiled, she spoke the same dialect as most of the adults on Berk, maybe she was from a nearby island.

"Going to Hogwarts?" He prompted.

"Aye, are you?"

"Yep. Just getting my robes and books."

"Don't you need a wand?"

Hiccup pulled his wand out with his right hand, "I have one already, and most of the other supplies."

"Oh, are wands useful?" The girl asked, leaning over to examine his.

"Can't really do magic without one, at least not unless you're really gifted."

"Do you know anyone who can cast without a wand?"

"I â€"

"Hiccup!" Stoick bellowed. Hiccup turned to see his father at the counter with the head seamstress.

"I have to go, it was nice meeting you." Hiccup said to the girl as he turned towards his father, putting his wand away.

"Hiccup? Is that your name?" The girl started chortling. The girl's mother scowled at her as Hiccup rolled his eyes. Once again, the Viking name stood out. He shook his head as he walked to his dad, hoping that being made fun of for his name wouldn't be a recurring theme at Hogwarts. Following his dad and the seamstress witch into the fitting room, Hiccup left thoughts of the girl with wild hair behind.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel waited patiently for Mother Gothel to return, writing a letter to her real parents, telling them about her Hogwarts acceptance letter. As she was trying to decide how to conclude the letter she heard Mother Gothel coming up the stairs.<p>

"Mother, you're back!" Rapunzel said excitedly as Gothel entered her room. Seeing the large bag in her hands she added, "And you have my school supplies!"

Rapunzel rushed over to take the packages from Gothel. Emptying the bag on her bed Rapunzel studied the contents.

"Rapunzel, be careful with that, you don't want to break anything. I'm not getting you a new one."

"Of course, Mother." Rapunzel gently picked out one of the books and begin thumbing through it. "This book wasn't on the supply list."

"I know, I got you a few extra books. You have a special gift Rapunzel; you'll have to be more prepared than the other students. And above all, make sure you keep your hair a secret!"

"I know, Mother, I know," Rapunzel said as she began to read the book.

"Don't read all your school books here Rapunzel, or you won't have anything left to do when you get to school. Mother knows best"

"Yes, Mother," Rapunzel said, "Thank you for getting my supplies."

"You're very welcome dear. I love you very much."

"I love you more." Rapunzel said hugging Gothel.

"I love you most." Gothel said kissing her hair.

#### 4. On the Hogwarts Express

**\*\*On the Hogwarts Express\*\***

"Come on, We're going to be late!" Jack said as he bounced ahead of his sister on the train platform.

"Jack, slow down," his mother called as she caught up with him.  
"We're an hour early, you won't miss the train."

"Mama?" Emma started, "Are we going on the train?"

"No, dear. Jack must go alone."

"Will I be able to go?"

"I don't know dear, we'll have to wait and see if that witch shows up again."

Jack slowed down and turned toward his mother and sister. "If she's a witch she could go, right?"

"I don't know, many schools only educate boys. Even if she is a witch, which I'm not sure she is, she might not be allowed in."

"If my sister can't go then I won't go!" Jack said firmly.

"Don't be ridiculous, we already bought your supplies, and I spent a whole week fixing up that used robe so it looks good as new. Besides, if she does get in, don't you want to be able to give her tips and help with homework and such?"

"Please go, Jack," Emma said to her brother. "You can teach me all the spells when you get back home!"

"Great idea," He hugged his sister, "I'll learn every spell and we can play together all summer!"

A shrill whistle blew around the platform, "I gotta go."

Jack grabbed his trunk of school supplies and began to heave it up into the train. As his mother bent down to help him, she noticed his sister running off.

"Oh, Jack, I must go catch Emma, can you manage the trunk by yourself?"

"Sure thing, Mother," he said as he struggled to lift the trunk to put it in a storage cabinet. Jack pushed up on the trunk but just as he almost had it on the rack, the contents inside must have shifted because it fell down on top of him, pinning Jack to the ground.

"Ach? What's this? Have you not got a grip on it?" Jack twisted around to see a girl with fiery red hair standing over him. He struggled to get out from under his trunk as the girl laughed.

"You know, you could help me instead of just standing there."

"Aye, I'll help ye, tho' it's yer ain fau't for bein' so clumsy." She moved to lift the trunk off of him.

"Hey! I wasn't being clumsy, I just lost control. And what kind of language is it you're speaking? I didn't understand half of what YE said," Jack said as he started to lift himself up.

"Fine, don' like the way I speak, eh? Then you can get out from under that yourself!" She dropped the trunk so fast Jack fell back to the floor.

"What is her problem?" Jack asked as he finally got his trunk off himself and lifted it up to the luggage rack, "She's the one who was laughing at me."

With a sigh, Jack moved to a nearby cabin where he could see the platform. Opening the window he spied his mother and sister. Waving to them, Jack settled down on the train.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup looked around. There were lots of other children and their parents here, but none of them were wearing helmets with horns. Hiccup briefly wondered if wearing his was a good idea. Everyone on Berk wore helmets with horns; he sort of assumed that all wizards did. Well this would be awkward. Not only would he stick out because of his name, but also because of what he wore. Maybe he'd take it off on the train.<p>

"So, where do you want to sit?" Stoick asked his son. Hiccup looked around, he saw the girl with flaming hair entering a middle carriage. He was about to follow her when he heard a brief high pitched scream from the front of the train. Turning, he saw a girl with long golden hair, even though it was braided it reached below her feet. A black haired woman was stepping on it, forcing the girl to bend.

"Rapunzel!" the woman with her said sharply, "Don't ever wander off like that again!"

"Yes, Mother," The long-haired girl said. The woman moved off her hair.

"Now be a dear and fetch your trunk. I'll see you when you get home." The older woman gave the girl a wave and walked away, leaving her alone with a trunk nearly twice her size. Hiccup watched as the blonde girl struggled to lift her trunk into the train.

"Let's go help that girl, dad," Hiccup said. Stoick nodded approvingly and walked over to the girl. His right arm was filled with Hiccup's trunk but he easily lifted the girl's trunk with his left hand.

"Let us help you with that," Hiccup said calmly.

"Oh, thank you," the girl said, "I didn't realize it would be so heavy."

"It's no problem," Stoick said as he shoved both trunks into the

luggage compartment.

Hiccup smiled at the girl. The girl smiled back and brushed her hair out of her face.

"Thank you for helping with my trunk. I'm Rapunzel."

"Hiccup," Hiccup said as he braced himself for mockery. To his surprise the girl didn't laugh.

"Well I'm pleased to meet you, Hiccup." She said offering her hand. He shook it and they walked into the nearest empty cabin. Stoick bent down and kissed Hiccup.

"If you need anything, just send an owl," Stoick said as he backed out of the train, "I'll send anything you need."

Hiccup smiled and waved his dad off as he and Rapunzel settled in their cabin.

"Was that your father?" Rapunzel asked.

"Yeah, Stoick the Vast. He's the chief of my tribe."

"The chief? Is that like mayor?"

"Kind of. Our island is halfway between Scotland and Norway, it's not technically part of either country, so no one really questions my dad's leadership."

"That's amazing! My parents are the King and Queen of Corona."

"Do you mean that that black haired woman with you was a queen?"

"Wellâ€¦no. That was Mother Gothel. My parents were concerned I would not be safe living in our palace, so they asked her to keep me safe until I was old enough to learn magic myself."

"So, you knew from the start that you were a witch."

"Yes, both my parents are magic. They said when I was a baby I cast a spell on my hair to make it grow forever, its over forty feet long now."

"Wow. Your hair does not look forty feet long."

"Mother braided it for me so it wouldn't be too long; she was afraid it would draw too much attention if it wasn't braided up like this."

"It draws a lot of attention anyway."

"I know, but mother couldn't make it any shorter."

"Couldn't you just cut it?"

"No." Rapunzel said but offered no further explanation. After a long awkward silence the children felt the train start to move. Rapunzel jumped up to look out the window. Hiccup peaked out from under her



sleeve in time to send his dad one last wave before the train pulled out of the station leading on to Hogwarts.

\* \* \*

><p>"Goodbye, Mum!" Merida called as the train pulled away. She ducked her head back inside the train drowning out whatever Queen Elinor shouted back. Now to find a cabin. Merida walked down the long corridor peaking into every room. Full. Full. Not full but with disgusting looking boys. Full. Empty. Merida opened the door and stepped into the cabin.<p>

"Hey, couldn't you knock?" Merida jumped as she heard a voice behind her. She turned quickly and found herself staring at the boy who had dropped his trunk earlier.

"Wha- how- how did you do that?"

"Do what?" The boy asked. Merida stared at him; she'd recognize that old innocent act anywhere. The boy was trying to scare her; why else would he have suddenly 'appeared' just as she walked in. He was trying to get back at her for dropping the trunk on him earlier. Well, two could play that game. If this rotten troublemaker wanted to start a war, he had succeeded.

"Yeh know very well what yeh did! And I'll not have it! Goin' around tryin' to scare wee girls just 'cause you're clumsy! Well you've met your match in me!"

"Geeze." The boy exclaimed, "What is your problem? First you drop a heavy trunk on me, and now you go around accusing me of scaring you. I can't help it if you're the easily frightened type."

"I-I-I'm the easily frightened type?! EASILY FRIGHTENED?!" Merida screamed at him, "I'll show you frightened!"

Merida quickly pulled out her wand and hit the boy on his head with it. As she moved in for a second blow he leapt into the air, jumping over her. He crouched as she turned to face him, pulling out his own wand he tripped the girl. Her hair caught on the open door as she fell, causing her to scream out in pain.

As the boy stood up he heard footsteps coming from the train corridor. Quickly he stuffed his wand under his vest, but apparently not quick enough. A tall, dark man entered the cabin and pulled the boy out into the corridor.

"What were you doing to that young lady?" He asked slowly, never relinquishing his grip on the boy's wrist.

"ME? It was herâ€|she started it."

"Oh, me, he says," Merida protested, having finally untangled her hair, "And I suppose yeh'd like to blame me for that little disappearin' act you pulled earlier?"

"Disappearing act? What are you even talking about?" The boy yelled struggling against the adult's grip.

"I don't care who started it," the man said, "I heard a girl scream."

I take it that was you."

"Aye, can't help it; being with a pig headed boy like this."

"HEY!" The boy said.

"School hasn't even started yet, and already we have troublemakers. You will both give me your names so I can punish you after you've been sorted." The man stared at the boy, "Name?"

"Jack Frost." The boy said quietly. The man harshly released his wrist and turned toward the girl.

"Name?"

"Merida of Castle Dunbroch." The man released her hand much more gently.

"Ah, Princess Merida, I was told there was royalty on this train, but I never expected to run into it so soon." The man turned back to Jack, "I'd walk on eggshells if I were you. Not many students get to enter Hogwarts after starting fights with royalty."

"I didn't start it!"

"The princess says otherwise and, after all, who would believe Jack Frost over the princess of Scotland? Now no more fighting or I may have to expel you before you even get to Hogwarts." The man stepped back quickly; he seemed to disappear into the shadows as he left the children alone.

"Well, you heard him, no more fighting. I get this room," Merida said quickly shutting the door on Jack Frost, leaving him out in the corridor of the train.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack stared at the closed door. Princess or not, that was just plain rude. He'd been in that room first. It wasn't fair; he didn't mean to scare her. So she didn't notice him when she opened the door; that was no reason to attack him. <em>Well, at least I know girls are accepted here<em>, Jack thought remembering Emma as he wandered into the next carriage looking for an empty cabin.

There didn't seem to be any left, but one of the cabins close to the front only had one student in it. Hoping this new wizard wouldn't be as fiery as the princess, Jack hesitantly knocked on the cabin door.

The wizard boy smiled and beckoned Jack in. Jack returned the smile and entered the cabin.

"Thanks, I was afraid I'd have to spend the whole train ride out in the corridor." Jack said as he sat down.

"No problem, first years always have trouble finding seats." The boy said, propping his feet up on his side of the cabin.

"Why is that?"

"They don't know anybody. First years search for an empty cabin alone, after the first year you'll have friends and you can find a cabin as a group."

"So why aren't you in a group? Don't tell me you're a first year?" Jack said looking at the scraggles of a beard starting to form.

"No, a fifth year."

"So why are you alone?"

"Sometimes all the chaos and noise gets to me, I needed a little relaxation before school started, you know? So let my friends party in the other cabins, I'll be the only one rested enough to pay attention during the sorting ceremony."

"Sortingâ€|someone else said something about sorting too, what is it?" The older boy leaned forward.

"Sortingâ€|Just their way to try and separate people. There are four houses and all the students are divided between them. They say it's so we'll be provided the resources to achieve our true potential. I say it's a way of lumping everyone together and trying to keep the school divided."

"Why would they want the school divided?"

"To drum up competition? I'm not really sure, but friendship between the houses is discouraged." The boy paused and looked at Jack, "Name's Flynn Ryder, by the way."

"Jack Frost." Jack replied and shook Flynn's hand, "So how do they sort people?"

"You come from a muggle family, right?"

"Yeah, so?"

"Listen kid, you might not want to go around shouting that out. Some, not most, don't like people who are muggle born. Not me, I don't see any difference, but people will treat you differently if they know."

"Why? What's wrong with having a muggle mother?"

"Is it just your mother? If your dad's a wizard you're fine."

"I don't know, my dad never told motherâ€|and he's gone now."

"Oh, I see," Flynn said, "It might serve your best interest to pretend he was a wizard. Especially if you get sorted into Slytherin, like me."

"Why would anyone care?"

"I don't know, same reason people care about how much money you have, or what class of nobility you are, I guess. It doesn't make sense to me, but you seem like a nice kid. Do yourself a favor and keep your blood status close to the vest, at least until you know what house you're in."

"Thanks for the tip, so what are the houses?" Flynn smiled and began a lengthy discussion of Hogwarts' rules and traditions.

\* \* \*

><p>"So, Hiccup," Rapunzel said breaking the silence, "that's an interesting hat."<p>

"What, this?" Hiccup said taking off his Viking helmet.

"Yes, I've never seen anything like it before."

Hiccup held it closer to the girl so she could get a better look. "It's all the rage on Berk. Everyone wears them."

"Wow, Berk sounds so different from my tower; tell me more about it."

"Well, it's on the Meridian of Misery, north of Hopeless and a little bit south of Freezing to Death."

"Is it really that bad?"

"It would be, for you, but we're Vikings, we're used to it. We have stubbornness issues, and there's always the pests to keep us busy."

"Pests?"

"Some places have mice or mosquitoes; we have dragons."

"Dragons?" Rapunzel squeaked, drawing her knees up to her chest.

"Yep, dragons. Fighting dragons is our way of life; it has been for three hundred years."

"Wow, you must be so brave."

Hiccup smiled at Rapunzel. Everyone on Berk thought he was a weakling; no one believed he was brave.

"Well, you haven't seen the rest of the town. Maybe someday you could visit Berk, and then you could see for yourself if I'm brave." \_And maybe convince the others that it was true\_, Hiccup thought.

"Oh, Mother Gothel would never let me go anywhere near dragons. She didn't even want me to come to school. She doesn't think I'm strong enough to handle myself out in the world." Rapunzel paused and sighed, "Well, if I do well enough in school maybe then she'll believe I'm strong enough and let me visit you."

"You should do great. If you could cast such a strong spell on your hair as a baby, you'll probably be the top of your class."

"Thanks, with all the dragon fights I'd imagine you know a lot of good defense spells already, maybe you could teach me?"

"Know the spells? Yes. Ability to execute them? No," Hiccup said,

feeling at ease around the girl, "I just hope I don't do too badly at school."

"It can't be that bad. We could work on spells together. I've never seen any spells preformed; I've only read the textbooks."

"You read all the books?"

"No, there were eight on the list; I only read seven of them."

"But you didn't just skim, you read every word?"

"I had a lot of time on my hands between when I got the books and today. I couldn't help myself. Still, books don't tell you everything. I wish I knew more about the spells used in the real world."

"I can help you there." And with that Hiccup explained and pretended to demonstrate every spell he knew for Rapunzel.

\* \* \*

><p><em>Lousy boy<em>, Merida thought as she flipped through the pages of one of her text books. \_Mum will never let me hear the end of this.\_ Merida paused as she noticed the school's emblem on the page. Looking at the text next to it Merida saw it was a history of the founding of the school.

Skimming through the entry, she saw a list of the founders and why they decided to start the school. Just as she was about to turn the page, something in Slytherin's section caught her eye. Reading this section more carefully, Merida read about Slytherin abandoning the school because the other founders welcomed people from muggle families, like hers.

Closing the book, Merida thought back to that mean boy. That must be why he was trying to scare her, the lout. He must be one of those blood purists mentioned in the book. Everyone knew King Fergus didn't believe in magic. It was no stretch to imagine that the boy recognized her parents as the King and Queen and knew they were muggles. Merida spent the remainder of the trip stewing over her encounter with the boy.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: My apologies for Merida's accent in this, I hope it's readable, at least where it's supposed to be, and I really hope it doesn't offend anyone. I got most of the Scottish slang from running what I wanted her to say through a Scottish translator online, so I'm not sure how accurate it is. I know her accent isn't this thick in the movie, but I feel that Jack wouldn't have the patience to sit there trying to decipher what she means, so when in Jack's point of view, her accent gets thicker because that's what he hears.\*\*

## 5. Arriving at Hogwarts

\*\*That warning, about Merida's accent on the last chapter? Add it to this chapter and double it for an Australian accent. On the bright side, this is probably the worst chapter as far as accents go.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Arriving at Hogwarts<br>\*\*

"Well, I'll see you in the Great Hall, Kiddo." Flynn said cheerily.

"You're leaving?" Jack asked looking up at the older boy.

"Can't help it. First years arrive differently than the rest of us. It'll give you a better view of the castle anyway."

"First years this way!" A booming voice bellowed from the back of the train.

"See you on the inside," Flynn said as he ran off with the other older students, leaving Jack to follow the booming voice alone.

As Jack looked around for the voice, he spotted an auburn haired boy and a girl with long golden hair going to the back of the train. Deciding that they looked like first years, Jack followed them to the edge of a lake where around ten small rowboats were lined up. As he neared, he realized the boy was the same one he had met outside of Gringotts, Hiccup. A large man shouted to the students to get in, four people to each boat.

Jack watched as the golden haired girl and Hiccup climbed into a boat. Jack moved to join them, but before he could reach the boat the redheaded princess jumped in. With a scowl, Jack turned to get in another boat, only to find they were all filled. Reluctantly he jumped in next to the redhead.

"Hey, gie yer ain boat!" Jack wasn't sure what she said, but it sounded like she wanted him to get out.

"I can't help it, everywhere else is full, like I would want to sit next to you! I can't even understand what you're saying!"

"She said to get your own boat." Hiccup said dryly. Jack stared at him wide eyed.

"You mean you can understand this crazy girl?" Jack said pointing to the redhead with his thumb.

"Fa ur ye callin' a bampot, ye glaikit spoon" The girl said, her face turning almost as red as her hair.

"Can you translate that?" Jack asked ignoring her as she glowered at him.

"She said, 'Who are you calling crazy, you useless jerk,'" Hiccup replied.

"How do you DO that?" Jack asked.

"Are you goin' t' get out or not?!" the redhead said glaring at Jack. As Jack opened his mouth to answer the boats started moving.

"Does that answer your question?" Jack said giving a big lopsided

grin, plopping down in a relaxed pose. Turning to Hiccup, Jack asked, "So how did you know what she was saying?"

But before he could answer the blonde jumped up in the boat, causing it to rock rather violently. She squealed excitedly, "Look, Hogwarts is on the horizon."

The group quieted as the castle came into sight. The tall dark towers blended in with the night sky, making it seem as though the yellow windows were floating above the lake.

Slowly the boats pulled into a dock underneath the castle. A short stubby man waddled halfway down the staircase and called to the students to follow him. The group climbed out of the boats, Jack moving as far away from the redhead as possible. The stubby man led them up to the main part of the castle but stopped just outside a pair of large wooden doors.

"Welcome to Hogwarts. I am Professor Haddock McFinnigan. The start-of-term feast is about to begin, but first you must be sorted into one of the four houses. Once you are sorted you will join that house's table and your belongings will be brought to that house's first year dormitory. Now you may straighten up a bit before the sorting, I will return when we are ready."

With that the pudgy man left. Students started whispering excitedly amongst themselves. Jack overheard the long-haired blonde asking Hiccup, "Do you think we'll have to do any magic?"

"Oh, Odin, I hope not," He said.

"Don't worry," Jack said coming closer to the boy and girl, "All you have to do is wear a hat."

"Wear a hat? What kind of test is that?" The girl with curly red hair said joining the group.

"No one asked you!" Jack snapped.

"They didn't exactly ask you either; and how would you know what the sorting is?"

"I know people," Jack said nonchalantly, "including a fifth year Slytherin. He told me all about the houses."

"You trusted a Slytherin?"

"Careful there, none of us have been sorted yet. Any of us could be Slytherin, including you." The girl's face turned redder, if that was even possible, but Jack's statement left her speechless. The silence only lasted a moment before she burst.

"M-me?! A slimy Slytherin! If tha' try an' sort me into Slytherin, I'd LEAVE!" As the girl shouted the last word the large doors opened and the stubby professor stepped back out.

"What is all the yelling about? We could hear you in the great hall." Everyone's eyes went to Jack and the redhead. The man sighed, "I don't have time to punish you, but consider this a warning. Any more disruptions and you will find yourselves on the train home. Now come,

the sorting ceremony is ready."

\* \* \*

><p><em>Of course,<em> Merida thought as she followed the teacher into the great hall, \_first he gets me in trouble on the train, then he spoils the boat ride, and now he's ruining the sorting ceremony.\_

Merida glared at the boy, ignoring the faculty addressing the students. She looked from the boy to the other students, somehow his robes seemed more fitting than everyone else's, as though they were made just for him. Figures a blood purist would have special robes, probably trying to distance himself from muggleborns like her. He was probably filthy rich, too, to have his own seamstress.

Merida was so focused on finding new things to hate about the boy she almost didn't notice when a pointy hat on a stool started to speak.

"I may be just a hat, it's true

But please don't let that fool you

For I know more about your mind

Than any coat or shoe"

Merida scowled, so the boy was right, the sorting did involve a hat.

"I know if you fit Gryffindor

If you show me a brave heart

For only those with courage

can share the lions' part

Or perhaps you fit in Hufflepuff

Where the loyal dwell

Friendship is their strong suit

All are treated well

But maybe you're a Ravenclaw

The eagerest to learn

Who's passion and intelligence

Are of most concern

And then there's dear old Slytherin

The oldest of the four

Who's cunning and ambition



Might help you learn more

So put me on and let me see

Into your young brain

And I will help you find your place

And your house proclaim!"

As the hat finished the hall burst into applause. The stumpy professor went up and stood next to the hat. Pulling out a list he began to read students' names. Merida watched as the first student went up. The hat shouted "HUFFLEPUFF!" to the room. The students applauded again as the first year moved to one of the tables in the middle. Merida watched as two more students were chosen; both went to Gryffindor.

"Princess Rapunzel of Corona!" The teacher called out catching Merida's attention. Another princess, in the same year? Merida watched as the long haired blonde girl from the boat ran up the steps and put on the hat. It didn't take long for the hat to call out, "RAVENCLAW!"

The girl jumped up and ran down the stairs, almost tripping on her hair as she approached the Ravenclaw's table. Merida was so busy watching her she almost missed her own name being called.

"Princess Merida of Dunbroch!" Realizing her name had been called, Merida hurried up to the platform with the hat on it. She pulled the hat on rather harshly.

"Hm," a voice said inside her head, "Brave of heart, wild and free. All actions led by courage, no choice about it, you're clearly a GRYFFINDOR!"

\* \* \*

><p>Jack watched as the redhead, jumped for joy and raced down to the Gryffindor table. Flynn had told him the Gryffindor-Slytherin rivalry was legendary. Jack briefly wondered if the hat had put her in Gryffindor based purely on her hatred for Slytherin.<p>

Jack was drawn from his thoughts as his name was called. He went up the stairs slowly and the hat was placed on his head.

"Oh yes," the hat said in his head, "You are a difficult one. Brave of heart, with a desire to learn, and a real goal in mind, though you may be a bit impatient. Your ambition is matched only by your courage. But where do you belong?"

Jack quickly remembered the song; the hat had mentioned Gryffindor being the house for the brave. Silently he hoped it didn't put him in the same house with the red-haired princess.

"You don't want to be in Gryffindor? Unusual, especially for one of your background, but if you wish it, SLYTHERIN!"

Jack smiled as he stood, pleased that he would already know somebody

in his new house. As he descended the stairs and went to the green table he noticed the redhead glaring at him. He smirked at her annoyance. Seeing Flynn with an open seat on either side of him, Jack sat to his left.

"Well, I'm impressed," Flynn said, "I didn't think you had Slytherin in you."

"Oh, I'm full of surprises," Jack said as he watched a few more students getting sorted. Two more for Ravenclaw, then "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third."

Jack watched the scrawny boy climb up to the hat. It was on his head for quite a while before it loudly proclaimed, "HUFFLEPUFF"

Hiccup let out a deep breath as he went down to the appropriate table and the sorting continued. Jack watched as the rest of the students were divided between the houses. As soon as the last one made her way to the Gryffindor table the teacher who had been reading names grabbed the hat and took it out of the room. A tall, old-looking wizard stood up and approached the edge of the stage.

"Welcome, students!" He said with a voice clearly enchanted to sound louder than he was speaking, "I am Headmaster Ombric. I hope you will all enjoy your stay at Hogwarts and have an exciting year of learning. Now time for the feast!"

He clapped his hands and the empty tables filled with food. Jack looked wide-eyed at the platters; he had never seen so much food in all his life. His sister would die if she could see all this food. He wondered if he could steal some of it and send it home. Would it survive the journey? Jack started taking big spoonfuls of everything onto his plate.

"Hey, slow down. It's not going to run out," Flynn said with a smile. Jack looked down at Flynn's plate, just as full as his.

"I don't see you skimping." Jack said.

"I've had the feast before, I know what I like; I'm just saying you might want to taste some of the stuff you've taken before you fill your whole plate with pickled dragons liver."

Jack looked down at his plate. He couldn't tell if Flynn was joking or if one of the strange dishes he had taken really was pickled dragons liver. Deciding that he didn't care, Jack took a bite out of a strange looking pink dish.

Relishing the sweet taste Jack was quick to gobble down the rest of the food on his plate. It tasted so different from the food his mother cooked. Jack finished his plate and resigned to stare at the food that had not yet been taken. Flynn gave him an odd look.

"You can have seconds, ya know." He said with a grin.

"I don't want it to run out." Jack said.

"Oh don't worry, the plates refill themselves. Watch." Flynn reached out and took the last roll off of a plate, immediately the plate was filled to the brim again. Jack couldn't believe it. He refilled his

plate as quickly as he could.

"Are meals always like this?"

"Yep, every breakfast, lunch and dinner." Flynn said casually.

"And the food never runs out?"

"Nope. Never." Jack couldn't think of anything to say. Whatever spell was on this table, he needed to learn it. Imagine how pleased mother would be if he could enchant their table so no matter how long the winter was they would never run out of food. For the first time in his life, Jack felt truly full.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup eagerly took in the food set on the plate before him. Berk usually had a surplus of food, but since everyone's energy was devoted to killing dragons, the food was usually tough and tasteless. Not here though. The food on this table was sweeter than anything Hiccup had ever eaten before, though Hiccup had avoided the pickled dragon's liver. People on Berk never ate dragon, too much chance they'd be eating one of their own limbs.<p>

Finishing his platter, Hiccup looked at the students around him. They seemed a pleasant lot, though the chatter was of topical details. Hiccup wondered why the hat didn't put him in Ravenclaw with Rapunzel. Stoick had told him about the Hogwarts houses and hoped Hiccup would get into Gryffindor, but Hiccup knew that was unlikely. Silently he hoped for Ravenclaw, but the hat had shouted Hufflepuff. Stoick would be upset.

Maybe the hat had put him in Hufflepuff because it realized he was a squib, maybe it knew there was a mistake in his acceptance letter and didn't have the heart to kick him out. After all, it did say Hufflepuffs are loyal; perhaps that was the only house that wouldn't expel him when they found out he couldn't do magic. He supposed telling his dad he was in Hufflepuff was better than telling him he was a squib. Who knows, maybe he could even fake it well enough his dad never found out. Stoick was so happy when he was accepted into Hogwarts, Hiccup couldn't bear to disappoint him.

A hand on his shoulder brought him from his thoughts, looking up he saw an older boy with a pleasant smile gesturing towards the door. Looking around himself, Hiccup realized all the students were going to their dorms. Returning the boy's smile Hiccup followed him out of the great hall into the main part of the castle.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel darted around excitedly as she followed the other Ravenclaws up the spiral staircase to the Ravenclaw tower. The students stopped in front of a door with an eagle knocker but no handle. The Prefect who had led them raised the knocker and the eagle head opened his mouth.<p>

"Why is a boggart like a ghoul?" The knocker asked. Rapunzel bit her lip in thought. Why would they be similar? Ghouls only moaned, boggarts scared people. Rapunzel had no answer for the door, the prefect, however, did.

"Because if a muggle met either one, they would scream." The door appeared to accept this answer as it swung forward to let them in. The room was circular, it reminded Rapunzel of her tower in the glen, except this room was decorated in royal blue, while she had painted her tower mostly pink.

A tall statue of a woman stood by a door, but it was the small living woman standing next to it that really caught Rapunzel's attention. The woman seemed to be wearing a dress and wimple made of green feathers, she smiled brightly and gazed at the students with violet eyes.

"Welcome Ravensclaws, it's so good to have you back, and to see so many new faces." She smiled at the first years. They smiled back. The woman gasped, "My, what nice teeth you all have. I'm so glad. I'm your head of house, Professor Toothiana. I teach History of Magic. Why don't you go on up to your rooms? The boys take the staircase on the left, the girls the one on the right. Your class schedules will be laid out on the beds and I am here if you have any questions."

Rapunzel followed the other first year girls up the right staircase into a higher part of the tower. The room was circular with six beds for the six girls. Every bed was next to a window. Rapunzel sat down on a bed with a window that overlooked the lake they had sailed across earlier that evening. She wondered how Hiccup was doing in Hufflepuff, he had seemed so smart on the train. Even though he hadn't performed any spells for her, he told her about many she hadn't even read about in her textbooks. He had even shown her some inventions he made to compensate for his lack of magic, like a small metal hook he could use to pick locks, substituting for the Alohomora spell. And he had a vial of a sticky white substance that, when applied with heat, would cause a similar effect to the permanent sticking charm.

Looking up at her roommates, Rapunzel saw the five girls taking their belongings from the corner of the room to the appropriate bed. Hopping up, Rapunzel followed suit, dragging her heavy trunk. Once the rearranging was done, the other Ravenclaw girls pulled out books to read before bed. Rapunzel pulled out a book as well, but not to read. No, Rapunzel pulled out her sketch book and began to draw. All the things she had seen that day, from the train, to Hiccup's father, the boat ride, the great hall and now the Ravenclaw room made it into the book.

Looking at her sketch of the boat ride, Rapunzel sighed in contentment. This was definitely the best day ever.

\* \* \*

><p>Merida gasped as she looked around the Gryffindor common room. She had never seen so much red in all her life; well, unless you counted all the redheads in her family.<p>

So far the students seemed nice too; every question she asked during dinner was answered in a friendly manner, even questions about the other houses. The other Gryffindors had overheard the fight outside the great hall before the sorting. They all agreed she did the right thing, telling the slimy Slytherin off. Even if he had been right

about the hat, it wasn't his place to tell. She hadn't been the least surprised when it called out Slytherin for him. That boy ended in the right place, all right. Merida was shaken from her thoughts as she realized someone was talking to her.

"Oy, it's beautiful, ain't it?" A tall man asked.

Taking a deep breath Merida looked again at the Gryffindor walls surrounding her, this was where she belonged, "Aye, it feels like home."

"Glad yah feel that way, little ankle biter. You'll be spendin' quite a bit of time around here. Seven years if you can resist makin' the kind o' trouble I'd have ta send ya away for."

Merida glanced at him curiously. He raised an eyebrow but then smiled, "I 'eard bout your fight on the train, and outside the great hall."

Merida gulped. She hoped that he wouldn't send her away, or worse, write to her mother. Bravely Merida asked, "You can't expel me for tha' can you? I mean, I wasn't technically a student yet, right?"

"You've been a student since ya boarded that train, but no, I'm not going to expel you." He smiled, "I've been head of Gryffindor house long enough to know ya can't be a Gryffindor without bein' a bit o' a brumby too. Still, I'm not supposed to encourage it, which is why I'm warning you, if these fights get out o' hand, I will have to take action. I'm givin' ya a free pass on the train incident and the sortin' ceremony 'cause ya weren't a Gryffindor yet, but further mischief will be punished, remember that. 'Sides, ya don't want to give Gryffindor a bad reputation, so at the very least make sure yer never the one ta start the fight."

Merida smiled; glad to know she wouldn't be punished for that rotten Slytherin being prejudiced. The tall man winked at her.

"Well, glad to have that sorted out. Now off ta yer room, you'll want ta get settled and look over yer schedule, don't want 'cha being late fer class yer first day, do we?"

Merida nodded and left the head of house to follow the other first years into the girls' dormitory. Despite the rough start, this had been a wonderful day. This was going to be the best year of her life.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack stayed close to Flynn as they entered the Slytherin common room. The green light cast a sickly glow across the room. Jack shuddered.<p>

"Drab, isn't it?" Flynn asked looking at Jack. Slowly Jack nodded gazing around the room. There was a fire lit in the fireplace, but the room still felt cold. Jack resigned himself; cold he could handle.

"Ah well," Flynn continued, "I suppose old Salazar didn't have much sense of style. Too busy fighting with the other founders."

"Now, now, my Flynn," A smarmy voice said coming out of the shadows. Flynn and Jack jumped at the voice. Focusing on the shadows, Jack's eyes widened as he identified the grey skinned man from the train, "You know Salazar only had this school's best interest in mind."

"I know, Professor Black." Flynn mumbled staring at his feet. Professor Black took Flynn's chin in his hand and raised the boy's head, making their eyes meet.

"You wouldn't be trying to corrupt your new housemates, would you?" Black said staring the boy down. Flynn began trembling as Black's cold amber eyes bore into his. Jack could hardly stand it.

"He wasn't trying to corrupt me!" Jack said bravely, attempting to stare down the older man. Professor Black turned his attention to Jack. Releasing Flynn and pushing him aside, Black towered over Jack. Jack, feeling the pressure of Black's eyes, looked down at his feet and repeated, "H-he wasn't trying toâ€¦to corruptâ€¦"

Jack let the sentence fizzle out, as his confidence faded. Professor Black grinned at Jack, "You, I remember youâ€¦ Jack Frost is it? Ah yes, I saw you at the sorting ceremony, quite a commotion before the feast, I must say."

Jack opened his mouth to defend himself, but couldn't find the words. Professor Black moved closer to Jack, his shadow looming over the eleven-year-old, "Combined that with your display on the train, and I'd say you've earned yourself a detention."

"What! But-" the professor pressed his finger to Jack's lips.

"Uh, uh, uh," Black said, shaking his head, "You wouldn't want me to up it from a detention to expelling, would you? As your head of house, that is within my power. You would be wise to fear me."

Jack looked down at his feet and Professor Black took a step back, "Your detention shall be served with me in the potions lab, tomorrow evening at seven thirty. Do not be late."

Black turned and strode back into the shadows as though he had never been there at all. After waiting a minute to ensure he was truly gone, Flynn stepped closer to Jack.

"Heâ€¦He wouldn't really expel me, would he?" Jack asked.

"He would. Never underestimate Professor Pitch Black. He teaches potions. Most teachers take away house points to punish us, not Pitch. He never takes points from Slytherin students; he always skips straight to detention."

"House points?"

"Teachers are supposed to add or deduct house points to reward or punish us. Pitch doesn't believe in that though, 'cause taking house points from Slytherin would punish him, too. Besides, older students aren't scared of losing house points, and there's nothing Pitch likes more than scaring students. They say he's part boggart, you know."

"Boggart?"

"You know, the monsters that live in your closet and can shape shift into whatever you fear most. Pitch can't shape shift, at least I don't think he can, but he has this innate sense of what people fear. You might have gotten off easy 'cause you're new, but usually his detentions put you in your worst nightmares."

"Wow, scary. So I take it everyone is afraid of Pitch?"

"Well, we're all afraid of his detentions, but he only really gives them out when the other houses are involved, or if we challenge his authority. I don't know exactly what you did to get detention, but I'll bet it involved a student from another house."

"Yeah, a Gryffindor girl."

"If she was a Slytherin instead you probably would have gotten off with a light scolding."

"Your really think so?"

"My first year I was in six fights with other Slytherins. Physical fights, with punches, kicks, even a broken nose. No punishment for it, but get in one verbal battle with an obnoxious Ravenclaw and I'm in detention."

Flynn glanced at the clock on the wall, "Wow, it's late. You'd best get up to your dormitory with the other first years, maybe you'll still be able to get a good bed. It'll be yours for the next seven years."

Flynn led Jack to the room labeled first years. Taking a deep breath, Jack entered the room. The other first year boys, who were in the process of unpacking, stopped and stared at Jack. Jack gave a small wave. A taller boy with blond hair broke the ice.

"Hey, your name is Jack, right?"

"Uh, yeah."

"I'm Derek. Derek Gaunt" The blonde said, "Great job before the feast, I loved how you put lousy Redhead in her place."

"Well, I didn't exactly put her in her place; I mean all I did was get her angry."

"Yeah," said a smaller boy, "but I'll bet she's never had anyone stand up to her like that. I heard she was a princess."

"That's right," Jack answered, "Someone told me she was princess of Scotland."

"Princess of Scotland? I've heard of her, her parents are muggles. I never understood why they would let people like her in this school," The blond boy said, "I'm sure glad they don't let filthy mudbloods in this house."

Jack Frost froze, he wasn't sure what mudblood meant, but it sounded like it had to do with having muggle parents. Flynn had warned him of

this. Derek made a joke about mudbloods. Flynn had advised him to laugh along with the others and hide his blood status. But Jack couldn't laugh.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with being muggleborn." Jack said.

"What? Muggleborns are just as bad as muggles."

"So what's wrong with muggles?"

"What's wrong with muggles?" Derek repeated turning on Jack. The laughter died and the room became deathly still. After a beat Derek laughed, "Oh I get it! Your parents must have kept you sheltered from the muggles, am I right? A nice pureblood family, made sure you never had any contact with the filth."

"Actually, no. I don't think there's anything wrong with muggles, my mother's a muggle after all."

The room quieted again. The small boy let out a nervous chuckle, "Ha, good one. Nice joke."

"It's not a joke, it's true. And I don't appreciate you calling my family filthy. Now I'm tired, and I want to go to sleep, so if you'll excuse me." Jack went over to the only empty bed and crawled in. He could feel the other boys eyes on him as he curled up under the covers, the thick green blanket doing nothing to keep out the chill. This would be a long year.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup lay awake staring at the gold ceiling. The other boys were sleeping soundly, but Hiccup couldn't will himself to join them. Classes would start tomorrow, and when they did, everyone would know Hiccup couldn't do a lick of magic.<p>

All his life, Hiccup had dreamed of going off to wizarding school, but now that he was here, he wished more than anything he was back home on Berk watching the Vikings battle dragons. Eventually Hiccup started drifting off to sleep. His last thought was wondering how long it would take for the headmaster to send him home for not being magic enough.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Now that the year has started, they can start to win house points. Who wins the house cup isn't important for the plot of the story, so I've put a poll on my profile to let the audience decide. Poll will be open until the last chapter before the end-of-year feast.\*\*

## 6. First Day of School

\*\*A/N: I've had a few questions regarding pairings. This story takes place during their first year, so there won't really be any romance. I do have plans to continue all seven years but I haven't decided any specific pairings yet.\*\*



\* \* \*

## ><p><strong>The First Day of School<strong>

The next morning Merida and the other Gryffindor first years excitedly hurried down to the dungeon for their first Potions lesson. Merida was exited to try making a potion, although she wasn't thrilled with the idea of having to learn with Slytherins. Though the corridor was cold and dark, Merida charged forward, leading the others to the classroom.

Merida was the first Gryffindor in the Potions room, though she quickly noted that all the Slytherins were there already, filling the left half of the classroom. \_Or maybe not all of them,\_ Merida thought as she scanned the Slytherins, looking for the annoying boy from the train. He didn't appear to be among them. Turning back to the right side of the classroom Merida was dismayed to see that while she had been examining the Slytherins, the other Gryffindors had filled all the empty seats.

Walking further back towards the right Merida spied one empty seat left in the far right corner. She raced to it, stopping dead in her tracks when she saw the other half of the desk was occupied with the annoying boy. Merida turned to look for another seat, but there were none. Reluctantly she sat down next to the Slytherin.

He looked up at her curiously but didn't say anything. Merida refused to even look at him, keeping her eyes trained on the door in anticipation of meeting the Potions teacher. To her shock, he didn't appear in the door, but seemed to come out of the shadows right behind her. She almost couldn't suppress a scream as she felt his grey hand on her shoulder. The Slytherin boy made a small chuckle, earning him a glare from Merida.

"Ah, Princess Merida," the teacher said with a grin. Merida focused her eyes and realized it was the same teacher who had stopped the fight on the train. His eyes almost seemed to glow as he spoke, "I trust you will not make any trouble in my class? Hm."

The way he looked at her felt like it bore into her soul. She squirmed a little and the teacher let go of her, moving to the head of the classroom. Merida felt her body relaxing as he moved away.

"Welcome, first years," he said slowly, "I am Professor Pitch Black, your Potions master. I will not lie to you, this is a dangerous class. You will be expected to mix potions correctly. If you should fail, the results could be disastrous. You will use one cauldron per table, which means you will have to work together. Should I find any pairs who are havingâ€| issuesâ€| cooperating," his eyes lingered on Merida, "I will not hesitate to make you test your potions on each other. And remember, one missed step and the potion could turn from helpful to deadly."

He paused, letting his speech sink in on the class. Many students twitched nervously. After what seemed a lifetime he spoke again, "Pull out your books and turn to page 63, a Cure for Boils. Read it, and then make it."

Pitch stepped back and faded out with the shadows. Merida pulled out

her book and began reading, as did the rest of the class. Merida had only read half the recipe when she noticed the boy next to her pulling out the ingredients.

"What are you doin'?" she asked, "You can't 'ave finished the readin' already?"

"Well I can and have," he said sharply.

"Oh gee, if you're annoyed with me, why'd yeh sit over here, instead of with tha' others of your kind?"

"Who said they were my kind?" the boy replied. "And you're the one who sat next to me, remember. It's not like I wanted to sit next to a whiny princess."

"WHINY!" Merida screamed at him.

"Shh.." Jack said, "You heard what Pitch Black said, if we fight we have to test our potions and, I don't know about you, but I've never made this before, so there's a good chance my potion will poison you."

Merida desperately wanted to argue, but saw the value of his point. She continued in a whisper, "Whinny? Really?"

"Yep. Every time I've seen you so far all you can do is complain about what I do. Even now. You stopped reading the spell because I finished first."

Merida opened her mouth to argue, but realized he was right. Resentfully she resumed reading. As she finished she looked at the boy. He had all of the ingredients measured out but had made no further progress.

"What's tha' matter. Stuck?"

"No, just waiting for you to catch up. Believe it or not princess, I'm not actually trying to get you. Besides, if the potion blows up I don't want all the blame."

Merida scowled but worked with the boy to brew the potion. An hour later everyone's potions were complete. Pitch strode back into the room, as though he had been there the whole time, causing everyone to jump.

"Well, well, it looks as though most of you succeeded, though I shall have to take these potions to truly test their potency. Bring your potions up to my desk and clean up your cauldrons. Class is dismissed."

Merida took the potion as the boy began to clean up their cauldron. He was almost finished cleaning when Merida came back. She grabbed her books and gave a faint nod as she headed out the door. He hadn't been as annoying as she was expecting, in fact he'd been rather nice. \_What am I thinking, s\_he thought,\_ he's a Slytherin! \_He was only being nice because he knew she was a muggleborn and was afraid she would poison him with an amateur potion. Maybe he wasn't as annoying as he could have been but he was still a jerk, and Merida was glad to think she wouldn't have to see him again until the next Potions class

in two days. At least that was what Merida thought, right up until she sat down in her next class, Transfiguration. The other students filed in, with Merida paying little mind to them, until she heard a voice she knew all too well.

"Hey, princess. All the other seats are taken." Looking up she found herself glaring into the brown eyes of the Slytherin boy.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup was standing outside the Potions classroom with several other Hufflepuff students when a glint of gold coming down the stairs caught his eye. Turning to focus on the Ravenclaw students running down the stairs, Hiccup spotted Rapunzel. She gave a bright wave.<p>

Rapunzel bounced over to him, "Why isn't anyone in the classroom yet?"

"Last night some of the older students warned us about Professor Black."

"Don't tell me you're afraid of the teacher?"

"Who me? Of course not," Hiccup said with false bravado, puffing out his chest, "I'm a Viking. We're not afraid of anything."

Hiccup stepped forward and reached for the door, only to jump back in fright as it opened before he touched it. A gust of wind from the door extinguished the torches on the walls. Several students let out a scream.

"Now, now," a voice seeped out of the shadows, "Don't tell me you're afraid of the dark."

Rapunzel flicked her wand, spoke a word and the torches relit themselves, casting light on a tall grey skinned man standing in the doorway. He focused on the girl.

"Thank you for restoring the light, however students are not allowed to use magic in the corridors, so I'm afraid I shall have to take a point from Ravenclaw."

"But she -" Hiccup started to defend his friend.

"I'd be silent if I were youâ€|unless you want to lose a point for Hufflepuff, too." The professor leaned closer to Hiccup, so close no one else would hear what he said. "After all, why would they bother keeping a squib if all he did was lose them points."

Hiccup froze. How did this teacher know he couldn't do magic? Did all the staff know? No, they wouldn't have let him in if he were a squib, would they? Rapunzel's hand on his shoulder pulled him out of his fears. Looking around he realized the professor had stepped back into the classroom and students were slowly filing in after him.

"It's okay, Hiccup. It's just one point. I'm sure I can get it back in another class," Rapunzel said, oblivious to what the teacher had said to him.

"Um, yeah, sure." Hiccup said as the two of them walked into the classroom together. Hiccup took a desk in the back, hoping desperately to stay under the teachers' radar. Rapunzel smiled brightly as she sat next to him. He smiled back, no need to trouble her with his fears. They turned their attention to the front of the classroom, where the grey skinned professor began to speak.

"Another year, another class. Welcome to your first Potions lesson, first years. I am your Potions Master, Professor Pitch Black. Mixing a potion is a delicate art, an art that all wizards and witches are expected to master. There is very little room for mistakes in this class. A single missed step and you will see a perfect cure turn into the deadliest poison." Professor Black paused here to let his words seep in before continuing, "You will work together, two to a desk. Now pull out your books and turn to page 63, A Cure for Boils. Read it, make it."

Pitch Black melted back into the shadows. Rapunzel and Hiccup followed Professor Black's instructions and read the page, both finishing before any of the other students.

"You read that fast," Hiccup commented as he got out the snake fangs and horned slugs.

"I read it at home, this was a rereading," she said as she prepared the mortar and pestle. "What about you? You were done almost at the same time as me."

"I haven't read it before, but it's used all over the place on Berk. I've helped some of the older Vikings with the crushing and I've watched them mix it." Hiccup smiled, he hadn't realized that making potions like this was considered magic, on Berk it was the same as cooking. Maybe there was a chance he wouldn't fail all his classes for not being able to do magic. Maybe, if all else failed, he could become a Potions Master.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack Frost was trying his very hardest not to yell at Merida, which was not proving to be an easy task. While Professor Bunnymund had been lecturing on Transfiguration it was easy enough to ignore the glares the redhead was giving him, but the professor had just given them ten minutes to skim the text book and figure out what the laws of transfiguration are.<p>

Jack had immediately pulled out his book, but Merida had turned on him the second the teacher left the room. "Wha' da ye think you're daeing? Why did ye sit next ta' me?"

"In English, please," Jack responded, still flipping through the book.

"Why did ye sit here?!" she whispered as forcefully as she could.

"I told you. There weren't any other seats."

"Tha's not true, there's a seat over there, by tha' tall blond Slytherin boy."

"So I see," Jack responded without looking up, "Well, I didn't see

that seat before I sat here, and I can't change seats now. Now, are you even going to bother looking for the laws, or are you just planning to cheat off of me, 'cause I'll tell you from the start, I have no clue."

Merida scowled, but pulled out her book and began halfheartedly flipping through it. Jack turned his attention back to his book, but it was incredibly difficult to concentrate with all the things that had happened today. It was his first day of school, and also the worst day of his life.

XoX

\_Jack could hardly sleep last night, hearing the other boys whispering about him, feeling their eyes on him. He did manage to drift off eventually, but when he woke up he discovered his trunk and belongings were missing. He found them out in the common room, next to the door. Flynn was lounging on the couch.\_

"\_That's you're trunk, right?" Flynn asked.\_

"\_Yeah," Jack said, debating whether or not to drag it back to his dorm or hide it in the common room.\_

"\_I saw three boys trying to drag it out of the common room into the main part of the castle. I figured it was yours so told 'em to stop or I'd set Pitch on them for being out of bed."\_

"\_Thanks." Jack grabbed an end of the trunk and started to drag it back to his room.\_

"\_I take it you told them about your mother."\_

"\_Yeah," Jack answered, panting from the heavy trunk.\_

"\_So, you didn't take my advice," Flynn said. "That's too bad."\_

"\_I can handle it," Jack said.\_

"\_I'm sorry, but I can't."\_

"\_What?" Jack dropped the trunk and looked at Flynn.\_

"\_I like you, kid, I do. But I'm not going to go through this again. You're on your own. I don't hang out with mudbloods. Goodnight." Flynn left Jack standing in the middle of the common room as he went back to his own dorm, never glancing back.\_

XoX

A girl's hand punching him lightly in his shoulder brought him back to the present. He looked at Merida, her hand still on his shoulder. She quickly pulled it away.

"'Ave you found the page yet?" She asked.

"Uhhâ€¦" he glanced down at his book, it was on a page showing human transformation, "...no. Have you?"

"This is taking forever! Why couldn't he just give us page numbers?"

Jack hated to admit it but he agreed with Merida. The textbook was nearly three hundred pages long, and with no frame of reference as to what the laws were, it was proving to be nearly impossible. As he flipped through the pages desperately hoping to come across something of value, he heard Professor Bunnymund came back into the room.

"Well? How did ya do?" Bunnymund asked the class. "Who can tell me what the laws are?"

No one volunteered an answer. The professor smiled, "Good, I didn't expect ya ta find anything."

Jack didn't know if he should feel relieved or angry at this revelation. Merida seemed ready to go the latter route; she was almost bursting from her seat, as though she would pounce at the professor. Bunnymund either didn't notice or didn't care as he continued to speak, "Many wizards believe there are limitations to what can and can't be transfigured. This is not true. Most of those rules are self imposed, put in place by the wizarding government. There are dangers to breaking them, it's true, but there's danger in every kind of magic. Now, I'm not encouraging ya to break the rules, after all they are there for a reason, but I am encouraging you to study them."

"Why did ya' make us go on a wil' goose chase then?!" Merida demanded. Bunnymund smiled at her.

"It wasn't a wild goose chase, mate. You found exactly what I wanted ya to find. You found that the book doesn't mention it. Not once. 'Cause the book doesn't call them laws. It calls them facts. When you read that book cover to cover, never missing a word, you'll see it presents 'facts'. Things like a wand can't be transfigured. I know this is untrue, it's against wizarding law, that's sure, but it's not impossible. I want you to be aware that the book is presenting laws as truths, and to realize that yer other books might be doin' that too. This isn't strictly related to transfiguration, but I felt ya should know. Otherwise ya might accept what was in that book as absolute truth, never believing ya can go against it. Do not underestimate the power of Belief, mate. Now that I've warned ya there's hope for the future. Well, my hour's about up. Your homework is to read Chapter One, and I'll give a house point to anyone who bothers to research the laws of transfiguration and can tell me what they are. Now off with ya."

Merida and Jack gathered their belongings and left the classroom. Jack looked down at his schedule, no more classes today. Perfect, at least he'd be able to do the reading before detention. He could go back to the Slytherin common room and make sure no one had found where he had hid his trunk, but Jack didn't really want to face the other Slytherins again. He could go to the great hall; of course he'd have to sit at the Slytherin table then, and lunch wasn't going to be served for another hour.

Jack ultimately decided to go to the library. At least there were no segregated tables there, he hoped. Who knows, maybe he'd even try researching the laws. While Jack wasn't particularly keen on helping his fellow Slytherins gain points, it would be fun to beat Gryffindor.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel and Hiccup had finished their potion. Though the professor had said he would have to examine them closer in his office, Rapunzel felt that their potion was perfect. Hiccup really knew what he was doing when it came to mixing the potion. Rapunzel knew all the steps, such as heating it 'til it turns green, but Hiccup had a deeper knowledge. Hiccup knew the specific shade of green and what the mixture should smell like. As Rapunzel dropped the potion off, she noticed the professor giving her a small grin.<p>

Rapunzel skipped back to Hiccup, they had double Potions today so the lesson was only half over. Hiccup smiled. He had almost finished cleaning up the leftover ingredients.

She sat down beside him and started cleaning out the cauldron. Professor Black stepped out of the room for a moment to take their potions to his office. As soon as he was gone Hiccup let out a big breath.

"Well, that went better than I expected," he said.

"I know. I saw the other potions on the desk; none of them looked as vivid as ours."

"It's probably your strong magic aura," Hiccup said modestly.

"No, it's because you knew what you were doing." Rapunzel put her hand on his shoulder, "I'm glad I have potions with you, you're experience is really useful."

"Ha, Hiccup the Useful, I wish the other kids on Berk could hear you call me that."

"Someday, everyone will call you that, or something equally as nice. I can see it." Rapunzel turned her attention back to the teacher's desk as Professor Black came back. He slid into the room and announced that the rest of the lesson would be spent taking notes. Rapunzel and Hiccup both pulled out their quills, parchment and ink and started writing.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack hardly noticed the rest of the day. He read the chapter, went to lunch and took a bit of food, and then went to the common room to see if his things were intact. Jack found his trunk where he had left it, hidden behind a suit of armor in the coldest part of the room. A quick check reveled that everything was still inside. The common room was deserted, all the other Slytherins were still at lunch, so Jack moved his trunk back to his dorm. Before anyone else could show up, Jack quickly emptied his trunk, hiding his belongings in various places around the room: his books were placed under his bed, his robes in the drawer under the window, his cauldron hidden behind a flower pot. He even found a crevice near the ceiling behind one of the support beams where he could hide his brass scales and telescope.<p>

Convinced that his things were well hidden and with a little time to spare, Jack decided to get back at his roommates. There was a good

chance he'd get another detention for this, but Jack didn't care. With a mischievous grin, he set to work.

## 7. Detention

### \*\* The Detention\*\*

Jack swallowed hard as he stood outside the Potions room. He wasn't sure what to expect. Professor Pitch Black seemed scary enough, and yet Potions class had been relatively painless, unless you count having to put up with Merida, but that was hardly Pitch's fault. Flynn had cautioned him about these detentions but Jack was a bit mad with Flynn at the moment and desperately wanted to prove him wrong.

It was seven-twenty when Pitch showed up, startling Jack as he appeared from the shadows. He gave a malevolent grin as he ushered the boy into the room. Jack walked slowly down the dark classroom. Though the green lighting and slimy walls had seemed creepy that morning, now, with no other children, it seemed downright spooky. Pitch led him to a back room, his office. On the desk were all the potions made that day.

"Sit," Pitch commanded pointing to a stiff chair in the corner of the room. Jack gingerly sat down; the chair offered no comfort at all. Jack watched as Pitch pulled out a small bottle. Pitch turned back to Jack, "Comfortable? You may be here for a while."

"I can manage," Jack said, wishing Pitch would tell him what this was about and get it over with. Pitch gave him a look, causing Jack to wonder if he could read minds.

"I can see you want to get right to business. Take off your robe and shirt," Pitch commanded. Jack froze. Pitch moved closer, "You're going to help me test the potion we made in class today, A Cure for Boils."

"Why do I need my shirt off for that?"

"All the potions were made by amateurs, remember. The chance that one could scar you is infinity high. If you do not remove your shirt, I shall have to do the test on your face where the scars will be visible to everyone."

Jack scowled but removed his robe, shirt and vest, leaving his chest and arms bare in the chilly dungeon. Pitch leaned closer and using an old rag dabbed some potion from a small bottle in various places along Jack's arms and chest. Jack started to twitch in pain as boils formed. Pitch counted them then dabbed some more of the potion onto his neck.

Jack fought back the tears of pain as the lumps developed. He also bit his lip to stop himself from crying out. Pitch counted again and put the bottle away. He stood at the table looking Jack over.

"Well?" Jack demanded, "Make with the cure."

"Patience my boy, we need these boils to grow to a larger size to



test the effectiveness of the potion." Pitch waited a full minute watching Jack twitching before he took one of the student potions and brought it over to Jack.

"I suppose we can start now. This potion was made by you and the princess. Let's see how well it works." Pitch applied the potion to one of Jack's boils. It shrank but did not disappear completely. "Tut, tut. I'd say that looks like a C minus. Though I suppose that is the best you could do. Let's hope another student managed better."

Pitch applied a different potion to each boil. Most had the same effect of Jack and Merida's, but there were a few that caused a worse breakout. The last potion to try had a more vivid shine than all the others. Pitch dabbed it on the last of the original boils and it disappeared completely. Pitch looked a bit sad.

"Hm. I suppose I shall have to give the students who made this one an A," Pitch said reluctantly. He used that potion on all the remaining boils on Jack, leaving Jack looking like he did when he came in. Jack pulled his clothes back on.

"Are we done?" Jack asked. Pitch nodded and Jack headed for the door. Before he could step out into the hall he heard Pitch calling for him.

"Wait one moment, Jack." Jack turned to face the teacher. Pitch said slowly, "Do you know why you got detention?"

"'Cause I was fighting?" Jack answered.

"No, because you were fighting with the Princess of Scotland. Attacking royalty is a serious crime and as this castle is in Scotland we are under her jurisdiction. You should count yourself lucky she didn't ask for you to be beheaded or we would have had to oblige."

"Wait, are you saying she commanded you to put me in detention?" Jack asked.

"It's not fair, I know, but I couldn't resist her, not without risking war with the Scots. Now it's getting late. You'd best head to bed. Go quickly, I'd hate to have to punish you for being out past lights out." Pitch pushed Jack out of the room, closing the door behind him.

Jack walked slowly to the Slytherin Dungeon. He hadn't really liked Merida but he certainly didn't hate her, so why did she seem to hate him? Was it just a power trip? Just a spoiled princess used to getting her own way, or was there something more? She certainly made up her mind to dislike all Slytherins but she had disliked him since they met on the train; before they knew what houses they were going to be in.

When could she possibly have ordered him to detention? Pitch had assigned it when they got to the common room after the sorting ceremony. Would she have had time to go to the teacher between the sorting and going to her own dorm, or did she ask for him to be in detention before the sorting, on the train? That made more sense.

Pitch had broken up their fight. He must have gone back to check on Merida. That would be when she told him to put Jack in detention. But why? Was it because he didn't treat her like royalty? He didn't know she was a princess. She attacked him without introducing herself.

Jack paused outside the common room door. As he reached his hand forward, he noticed a tear in the sleeve of his robe. His mother did a good job making his robes fit, but they didn't quite look like everybody else's; maybe that was Merida's problem. Maybe she saw his tattered, home sewn clothes and realized he was just a poor boy. Maybe she felt that school should be exclusive to the rich, just like muggle schools. That would explain her irrational hatred.

Jack made it to his dorm room. The other boys were already sleeping. Jack chuckled quietly when he saw his trunk was missing. Perfect, the other boys had fallen for his prank. Jack pulled his pajamas out from where he had hidden them, and before long he was fast asleep.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Sorry it's so short, I promise I'll make it up in the next chapter, when the big four get to actually start interacting with each other. Also coming next week: the reveal of what Jack did to his roommates.\*\*

\*\*On a side note, polls are still open, and there is a link in my profile to an off-site poll for those of you who don't have an account or want to vote more than once. No hurry, polls will be open until just before the last chapter.\*\*

## 8. Budding Friendships

\*\*Budding Friendships\*\*

Hiccup was the last person to enter the Charms room the next morning. Almost all the Hufflepuffs had been late, due to a staircase moving on them. Most of them had run to the classroom, unfortunately Hiccup was the slowest, meaning he was almost a full minute later than the other students. All the seats were filled. Hiccup took a desk in the back of the classroom. No sooner had he sat down than the Charms teacher appeared.

"Welcome to Hogwarts-" The teacher was interrupted by the door flying open as the girl with wild red hair Hiccup had met in Diagon Alley stormed in.

"Sorry, I got lost," she said, her face turning as red as her hair. The only empty seat was the one next to Hiccup. She went over and sat next to him. The teacher continued with his introductory speech and gave them notes on some basic charms. After that he had them all pull out their wands and practice the wand movements for the basic charms.

As Hiccup moved the wand gracefully with his right hand the way the paper indicated, he noticed that the girl beside him was jabbing it out in front of her.

"Um, you might have better luck if you move from your wrist and not your elbow," he said quietly.

"I can figure it out for myself, thank you," she said forcefully. Hiccup rolled his eyes and went back to practice the other wand movements. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed that the girl had followed his advice and was now making the proper motion with her wrist.

"I got it!" she exclaimed, "Now when do we get to cast these for real?"

"Not for a while, I hope," Hiccup muttered to himself.

"You don't want to cast spells?" the girl asked curiously. Hiccup looked at her; he hadn't meant for anyone to hear that.

"I do, I just want more time to practice," Hiccup said, secretly worrying that no amount of time would be enough. The girl watched him do a few more practice swipes.

"More practice? But you have the movement down perfect."

"There's more to magic than just wand movement."

"Ack, I know that," she said, turning back to practice her wand movements. "M'name's Merida, by the way, dinnt' I hear your dad callin' you Hiccup?"

"Yeah," Hiccup replied.

"How did you come to have such a strange nickname anyway?"

"It's not a nickname, and it's not so strange on Berk."

"Berk?"

"The island where I live. There are even a few sheep named Hiccup, among other things." Merida didn't have a chance to answer as the professor called out for everyone to stop practicing as class was almost over. He assigned a reading from the book and dismissed the students.

"Well, I'll see you later, Merida," Hiccup said as he left the classroom. Glancing at his schedule he was relieved to see his next class, Defense Against the Dark Arts, was on the same floor, no more moving staircases.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel sat at attention waiting for the History of Magic to start. After having first period off, she was ready to learn. She had been one of the first students in the classroom, though it was quickly filling up.<p>

Rapunzel nervously played with her braided hair. She knew it would draw attention. \_Relax, \_she thought to herself, \_none of them know about my hair.\_ Rapunzel was spared from worrying about students noticing her hair when a girl with even more noticeable hair walked

in.

Rapunzel remembered the girl from the boat ride to the castle but she had been too excited about Hogwarts to bother learning her name. The redhead looked around before her eyes settled on Rapunzel. She made her way to the blonde.

"Do you mind if I sit here?" she asked. Rapunzel eagerly moved her stuff to ensure the redhead had enough room. The redhead smiled and sat down.

"Hi, I'm Rapunzel," Rapunzel started.

"Merida."

"Merida, didn't they call you a princess at the sorting ceremony?"

"Ack, don't remind me." Merida rolled her eyes.

"Why? What's wrong with being a princess?" Rapunzel questioned, feeling self-conscious.

"All the lessons, the rules. I never get away with anything!" Rapunzel relaxed.

"Oh, that. That's not so bad."

"Not so bad? Have you ever had princess lessons?"

"Well, kind of," Rapunzel mumbled, "I mean, I am, sort of, you know the princess of Corena."

"Really?" Merida asked.

"Yeah, it's not a big deal or anything, though."

"Wait, Corena? That's near Germany, right?"

"Right."

"They don't have a princess," Merida stated, skeptical.

"Yes we do; my magic was out of control when I was born. They were afraid I would cast spells that affected the whole kingdom, so they started the rumor that I was kidnapped as a baby." That wasn't the exact reason they started the rumor, but it came close.

"I suppose I do remember something about a lost princess, after all."

"That's me, I'm the lost princess. Though if this school thing works out, I won't have to be lost for long."

"I wouldn't mind being a lost princess, no lessons, no rules."

"Oh, there are lessons and rules, lots of rules. I mean I am going to rule a kingdom, hopefully. I have to be prepared."

"Well, you probably don't have to read whole speeches in front of

gigantic crowds."

"No, I-" Rapunzel was cut off as Professor Toothiana came into the room, her feathered dress trailing behind her.

"Welcome to History of Magic everyone!" she said excitedly, "Now, I know a lot of students don't like history, but it's important we keep the events of the past in our memory. After all, knowing about past experiments with magic could save you some cauldrons and eyebrows. I don't expect you'll like the work, but it really is important, and it could help you. Now let's start with the founding of the school."

And with that she launched into a lengthy lecture about the history of the school. Merida and Rapunzel had no more time to talk as they took notes.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup and the other Hufflepuffs made it to Defense against the Dark Arts with time to spare. Hiccup sighed in relief. This class was with Slytherin. Most of the other Hufflepuffs were afraid of Slytherins; they had a reputation for cheating and producing dark lords. Hiccup wasn't sure what to think. Most of his tribe went to Durmstang, which was also known for producing dark lords, but Hiccup knew plenty of graduates who weren't dark, including his father and Gobber. On the other hand, Slytherin was also well known for having a hatred of anyone who had muggle blood. <em>Or squib blood<em>, he thought, not that he would let anyone know that.

Hiccup was the first Hufflepuff to walk into the classroom and was surprised to see a student already seated. He was lounging on a desk in the back corner of the room, as Hiccup drew closer to the brown haired boy he noticed the boy had a vicious looking black eye.

At first Hiccup intended to ignore the boy and sit somewhere else, until he realized all the other Hufflepuffs were still in the pairs they had been in during Charms and Potions. Hiccup thought about sitting alone, but there was a good chance another Slytherin would sit next to him. With a gulp, Hiccup walked up to the boy with the black eye. As he got closer he realized it was the boy he had met in Diagon Alley, what was his name? Jason? No, Jake? No, Jack? Yeah, that sounded right. He seemed harmless enough before they were sorted.

"Hi, Jack, mind if I sit here?" Jack focused his good eye on Hiccup.

"Go ahead," Jack said somberly. "It was Hiccup, right?"

"Yeah. And I suppose you'll want an explanation for my name."

"Nah, it was weird, you know, the first time I heard it, but I've since met several people with weird names."

"Who?" Hiccup asked incredulously. Who could have a weirder name than Hiccup, besides other Vikings, that is.

"Well, the Potions master, for one. Pitch Black. Now I don't much care about the Black part, that's common enough, but who names their

kid Pitch? You gotta admit, that's worse than Hiccup." Hiccup wasn't sure how he was supposed to respond to that. Jack didn't appear to be waiting for an answer so Hiccup let the subject drop.

Jack said nothing more. Hiccup felt an awkward silence creeping up. In a spurt of bravery he asked, "What happened to your eye?"

Jack gave him a weird look. Hiccup amended quickly, "Never mind, if you don't want to talk about it."

"No, I don't mind. I played a prank on my roommates last night. When they woke up and saw what I had done, one of them gave me this shiner."

"What did you do?" Hiccup asked. Jack gave a laugh.

"I hid some of their things in my trunk."

"You stole their things?"

"Hey, if they'd given me a chance I would have told them exactly where their stuff was. I didn't even lock my trunk."

"So where's the prank part of this?"

"Well, the boys failed to ask me before they heaved my trunk into the lake. That's why they aren't here yet." Hiccup looked around. Jack was right, all the Hufflepuff first years were here, and the Slytherin girls were here, but Jack was the only Slytherin boy.

"Why would they dump your trunk in the lake."

"They don't think I belong in Slytherin," Jack said but volunteered no further information. Hiccup was about to question him when the door opened and four soaking wet boys entered. Each one cast a glare at Jack as they made their way to the empty seats. Jack chuckled. Just then a teacher appeared in the doorway.

"Glad you could join us," he said, "I suppose you felt like swimming before class?"

The boys scowled but said nothing. The teacher waved his wand and their clothes dried. The teacher moved further into the room, "I was going to start class on time, but seeing a quarter of it was missing I postponed the opening. I trust you will not be late again, for I will not be so kind next time."

Several of the boys turned to give Jack nasty looks. Jack ignored them, grinning as the teacher continued.

"I am Professor William Joyce, I will be teaching you how to defend yourselves against dark magic and dark creatures. Let's start with curses."

The professor went on to list several basic curses and ended the lesson with an assignment to look up the counter curses for them. An easy task for Hiccup, back home Snotlout had mastered most of the curses by age seven, and used them frequently on Hiccup. Stoick and Gobber were always performing the counter curses. Hiccup knew them by heart, even if he couldn't perform them.

Hiccup gathered up his books and things, as did most of the other students. As he was about to leave, he noticed that Jack had made no move.

"Do you have another class today?" Hiccup asked.

"Yeah, Charms, but it's not until after lunch. You?"

"Nothing else today." And then Hiccup surprised himself, "Do you want to work on the homework together?"

Jack stared at him as though he was crazy. Hiccup started to wonder if he was crazy, sitting next to a Slytherin was one thing, but spending you're free time with one was unheard of.

"Don't you want to study with the other Hufflepuffs?" Jack asked. Hiccup shook his head. Jack's face broke out into a big grin. He grabbed his stuff and the two boys left the classroom.

\* \* \*

><p>"Ugh, well that was painful," Merida said as she left the History classroom with Rapunzel.<p>

"I thought it was fascinating," Rapunzel said as they reached the hallway.

"Fascinating? How could it be fascinating? It was almost as bad as one of Mum's lessons! I don't care where the magic comes from; let's get down to casting spells already."

"There's more to magic than casting spells."

"I'm startin' to see that," Merida replied crossly, "but if we don't get to start using our wands soon I'm going to think this whole school was a plot set up by my mum and that dad was right: magic isn't real."

"How can you say that?" Rapunzel asked, "What about the sorting hat? And the way the feast appeared?"

"Fine, I suppose magic does exist, but I'm starting to doubt that I'm a witch. Why won't they let us cast one teeny tiny spell?"

"They want us to be able to control our magic first; otherwise the spell could get out of hand."

"'Out of hand'?" Merida questioned.

"Look at my hair. They say I cast a spell on it as a child so it would never stop growing." Merida looked closer at Rapunzel's hair; she knew it was long, even from a distance you could see it trailing behind her, but now that she was really looking she saw it was actually much longer, being braided up and down multiple times.

"You did that with a spell?"

"Well, I'm not exactly sure. I don't remember that far back," Rapunzel confessed.

"So you've never cast a spell knowingly?" Merida said, slightly disappointed.

"Yesterday I lit a fire outside of Potions."

"You set the school on fire?"

"No!" Rapunzel quickly corrected, "Just the torch on the wall."

"Show me."

"Professor Black said it was against the rules to use magic in the hallway."

"Nobody is watching, go on then."

"No, I lost a point for Ravenclaw already, I can't lose more."

"Then let's find a place you can do magic"

"Where?"

"The common room, maybe?"

"But we're in different houses."

"I don't care. I'll let you into the Gryffindor common room so you can show me the spell," Merida said, taking Rapunzel's wrist and leading her to the Gryffindor tower.

"This isn't against the rules, is it?"

"They never said we couldn't invite guests up." \_They never said we could either\_, Merida thought, though there was no way she would say that to Rapunzel.

Merida dragged Rapunzel through the castle up to the painting of a fat lady that hung outside the Gryffindor common room.

"Password?" The painting asked

"Wisps," Merida replied. The tapestry rolled itself up so Merida and Rapunzel could step through. As soon as they were in, the painting closed and Merida turned to Rapunzel and, with her arms crossed, demanded, "Now show me!"

Rapunzel found an unlit torch on the wall. With a wave of her wand and an incantation, the torch flickered to life. A huge smile lit Merida's face.

"I want to try it!" Merida found another unlit torch. Copying what Rapunzel had done Merida cast the spell. The torch came to life. Merida was ecstatic, until she realized the curtains beside the torch had also caught fire.

"Aguamenti!" Rapunzel shouted, a stream of water burst from her wand putting the flames out. Merida gulped.



"O.K., I'm starting to see what you mean about being uncontrolled," Merida admitted, "Let's get out of here, before someone sees this."

Merida and Rapunzel left the common room in a hurry. They ran through the castle, stopping outside the library. After catching her breath, Merida spoke, "Thanks for putting it out, I could have been in real trouble if I set fire to the common room. So what class did you learn those spells in anyway?"

"I haven't had a class that teaches spells yet, only Potions, History of Magic, and Astronomy last night. I have charms with Slytherin later today, though."

"I don't envy that. Charms class is somewhat fun, but the Slytherins are awful."

"What's wrong with them?"

"They're evil, that's what. It's practically in their house description. And there's this one boy, he keeps sitting next to me, even when there are other seats. I'll bet he's tryin' to screw me up, make me lose house points so Slytherin can win the house cup."

Merida looked at Rapunzel, the girl's green eyes had gone wide with fright. Rapunzel asked slowly, "It's so early in the year, do you really think he's trying to sabotage you?"

"All Slytherins are nasty cheaters; everyone knows that. That boy just happens to be more ruthless than any of the others. If you manage to sit next to a Ravenclaw though, you should be fine."

"Thanks for the advice." Rapunzel said, "I think I'll head down to lunch now, maybe warn my classmates."

"I'm a bit hungry m'self," Merida said. The two girls turned away from the library without going in and headed down to the Great Hall.

\* \* \*

><p>Inside the library, at that very moment, Jack Frost was watching Hiccup demonstrate the counter curse to the Curse of the Bogies. Jack checked the book. Hiccup had done it perfectly, and he hadn't even looked in the book. Jack was impressed.<p>

"Okay. How did you know that?" Jack asked.

"Last winter, Snotlout tried that curse on me. My dad was furious with him and nearly broke his wand." Hiccup had been reserved at first, but the more Jack asked about where he learned the wand movements, the more he opened up. Hiccup continued, "If our dads weren't brothers, I think he would have."

"Wow, a broken wand, I don't know what I'd do if my wand broke," Jack said, thinking back to Diagon Alley. The wand was the only thing they had bought new, there wasn't enough money left for a second one, not that Hiccup had to know this.

"A broken wand itself isn't too much of a big deal; you can always buy a new one. The real issue was that it would have been the chief breaking his wand. If the chief of a wizarding community breaks your wand it means you're forbidden to do magic."

"Pretty harsh for one curse."

"Oh, it wasn't one curse. Snotlout managed to curse everyone."

"Everyone?"

"Well, almost everyone. I think Astrid made it without getting cursed,"

"Tell me about Astrid," Jack asked. Hiccup launched into a lengthy description of what she looked like and how they spent childhood together. Jack interrupted frequently to ask about the other people on Berk.

Jack laughed loudly as Hiccup described the twins. There was nobody like that in his hometown of the Burgess. Unfortunately, his laughter caught the attention of the librarian, who promptly kicked him and Hiccup out of the library.

"Well, that was embarrassing," Hiccup said as the boys left the library, Jack still laughing.

"Are you kidding? That was the most fun I've had since I got here," Jack said as he stifled his laughter and got his breath under control.

"You think getting kicked out is fun?"

"Nah, I meant before we got kicked out."

"Me too, you're fun to be with."

Jack smiled, it was nice to have friend. Back home he was always the center of attention, but since he got here he felt invisible. A clock chimed. Jack's smile vanished, "It's time for lunch; guess I'll see you later."

Before Hiccup had a chance to say anything, Jack darted off. Jack waited a minute before peeking back around to see if Hiccup had left. He had.

Jack liked Hiccup, but considering how his roommates had treated his stuff, he didn't want to see how they might treat his friend. Jack waited in the corridor for a full ten minutes before heading down to the Great Hall himself.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel was just finishing her hazelnut soup when the door to the great hall opened. Merida leaned over from the Gryffindor table. She pointed to the brown haired boy who walked in.<p>

"That's the boy I was telling you about, the ruthless Slytherin!"

Merida whispered to Rapunzel. Rapunzel watched as the boy sat down at the end of the long table, leaving at least two plates between himself and the other Slytherins.

"Are you sure about him? I mean, he's sitting all by himself."

"He's just stuck up, probably thinks he's too good for the other Slytherins. One of those elitist types. You stay away from him, he's no good."

With that word of warning Merida went back to chatting with the Gryffindors, leaving Rapunzel to think. Rapunzel watched the boy as he heaped a mountain of food onto his plate. He gobbled the food hurriedly.

Rapunzel tilted her head thoughtfully. Why would he be eating so fast? Sure he had been late to lunch, but the lunch hour wasn't even half over, surely he would have enough time to eat his fill.

As Rapunzel was thinking this, she noticed some other Slytherins sliding down the bench moving closer to the boy. One of them threw something onto the boy's plate. The boy jumped up, gave them a glare, and promptly walked out of the great hall, grabbing an apple off the table as he left.

Rapunzel hardly noticed the rest of the day passing. She couldn't stop replaying the events of lunch as she wandered into the Charms class later that day. Rapunzel had been going slower than her classmates; still she was surprised to see the class was almost full. She looked around, no sign of the Slytherin boy from lunch. Rapunzel decided to follow Merida's advice and sat down next to another Ravenclaw.

After a few minutes the Charms teacher came into the classroom and started the lesson. He had only been talking a few minutes when the doors opened and the boy entered. He stared at his feet, a furious blush rising to his cheeks, as he briskly walked to the only empty desk, murmuring an apology.

The teacher sighed and continued the lesson. Soon Rapunzel was too busy taking notes to pay any attention to the boy. At least she was until the teacher released the class to practice wand movements. Rapunzel had practiced many of the wand movements on her own out of the book, and Hiccup had demonstrated many of them on the train.

Feeling rather confident Rapunzel took the time to look at the other students. Some were lazily moving their wands about, as though they had learned these spells long ago, others were waving their wands in such an awkward fashion it was hard to believe they had ever held a wand before. Most were somewhere in between.

Rapunzel looked at the brown haired Slytherin boy. His wand movements were a little rough but still identifiable. Most of the students gave each form a few tries before moving on to the next form, not this boy. He kept practicing the same one, gritting his teeth each time he made a mistake but starting over.

He barely got through the second wand movement before the professor announced class was over and assigned a reading. Rapunzel took down

the pages they were supposed to read and, when she looked up, the Slytherin boy was gone. Rapunzel shook her head and left the classroom with the other Ravenclaws.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack Frost raced out of the classroom as soon as he could. Quickly he turned away from the dungeons, intent on spending every minute he could away from his roommates.<p>

After lunch they had ganged up on him and locked him in a storage cabinet, trying to make him miss class as revenge for making them late for Defense Against the Dark Arts. He was glad he had spent the morning studying counter curses with Hiccup. It took nearly a half hour before he got the Alohamora spell to work, but it kept him from missing the whole class.

Still, Jack knew they would come after him again, which was why he was determined to perfect every spell he could. Hiccup had given him an idea of the basic curses and their affects, but Jack knew he would need a lot more practice before he could feel safe in the Slytherin dormitory. For now, though, he needed to find a safe place to practice.

Jack spent his afternoon wandering the castle. He made a note of every empty classroom he stumbled upon; he could probably practice magic in one of those rooms. As it was nearing dinner time Jack found a secret passageway behind a statue of a wizard. Following it led him to the kitchens.

Feeling slightly hungry and not wanting to go back to the Slytherin table, Jack opened the kitchen door to see a multitude of elves. These elves were all wearing thin, brightly colored tunics as they went about making food.

Jack bravely tapped one of the three foot elves on his shoulder. He wasn't sure if students were allowed in the kitchens or not. The elf turned, giving Jack his full attention.

"Hey," Jack started, "can I get some food here, uh, please?"

The elf darted away. Jack wondered if he had somehow insulted the little creature. However his fears were washed away as the elf came back with a large plate of food.

Jack took the plate from the elf and stepped back outside; he didn't want to get in the elves' way. Jack ate the food slowly, savoring its taste. He hadn't been able to enjoy any food since the great feast. The other boys had been very good about making him late and slipping things into his food.

Yesterday he was eating a pancake one minute and the next his plate was full of an odd colored green substance. Jack didn't know if it was a harmless substance or poisoned so he didn't take any chances. Today he had had better luck on getting enough food, but in his hurry he hadn't really tasted it.

After eating his fill, Jack gave the plate back to the elves and went back upstairs to a small classroom covered in a layer of dust. Jack figured no one had been in here for over a year, not even the

cleaning staff. Jack holed himself up in the room and began practicing the spells they had learned in charms.

Jack stayed here practicing all the way until he heard the clock chiming, a warning that bedtime was soon. Suddenly panicking, Jack raced down to the dungeons, making it into the common room less than 10 seconds before nine o'clock.

Jack gave a jump for joy as he skipped to the bedroom through the empty common room. He didn't notice the shadows growing steadily around him until he felt a hand on his shoulder.

Giving a jump and turning quickly, Jack found himself staring into Professor Black's eyes. Pitch loomed over him and whispered in his ear, "Very lucky, Jack. You made it just in time."

Jack wasn't sure if Pitch was congratulating him or threatening him. Pitch stepped back and looked the boy over, "I didn't see you at dinner? Where have you been?"

"Just, you know, doing homework," Jack said starting to move to his dorm room. Pitch eyed him coolly. Jack added, "School stuff."

"Hm, are you sure you weren't avoiding your classmates?" Jack froze in fear. Flynn had told him that Pitch always knew what you were afraid of. Pitch continued, "Don't worry Jack. They're not going to hurt you."

"Tell that to my eye," Jack said wryly. He wasn't too concerned with the eye, it was no worse than the one that Peter from Burgess gave him for a similar prank. He wasn't afraid of being hurt; Jack was far more afraid of curses.

"But curses can hurt, Jack," Pitch said, as though he had read Jack's mind, "These boys are amateurs, though, they won't know any of the truly harmful curses."

Jack thought about this. He wondered what the worst curses were; he didn't have too much time to wonder as Pitch spoke again, "If you're lucky you will never have to know about those curses. Now run off to bed, you only have a few short hours until you have to be up for the Slytherin astronomy lesson."

Giving a groan Jack trotted off to bed, glad to see the others in his room were already fast asleep. Plopping down on the bed, Jack was allowed a few hours sleep before he had to get up and go to the astronomy tower.

Jack lightly dozed, barely hearing Professor Manny Lunanoff as he lectured about the moon. From the way the professor was talking it sounded almost like he lived in the moon.

After the astronomy lesson, back in the cold dungeon, Jack found himself in a nightmare, a nightmare where he was always cold, the only comfort was the moon which was somehow alive, speaking to him with the voice of his astronomy professor.

## **\*\*Friendships Tested\*\***

Merida sulked down to the Potions room the next morning. Her perfectly cheery mood had been ruined with the realization that she had Potions first this morning. She spent the whole breakfast hour trying to convince any other Gryffindor to swap places with her in Potions.

None of the students were willing to trade with her. The Gryffindor first years amounted to an odd number, so one student would always be left out. Merida pleaded with them to take turns with her, especially in classes with Slytherin, but no one would. The other students were quite happy in the pairs they had formed during their first few classes and saw no reason to split up.

Crossly, Merida sat down in the seat she had been in during their last Potions class and waited for the lesson to begin. For an instant she thought the boy might not come. All the other seats were full, and the boy hadn't come yet. Maybe he was out sick?

Her hopes were dashed as he bounded in a minute before class started and sat next to her. The boy didn't even look at her as he sat down. Scowling, she turned up her nose at him. Two could play this game.

Luckily, today was all notes, so Merida really could pretend the boy didn't exist. And, unlike on Monday, she didn't have Transfiguration later today, in fact, after this Potions class was over she wouldn't have to see another Slytherin until Friday's double Potions.

As Merida left the Potions lesson without having acknowledged that boy at all. She sighed happily, a little less than two full days before she had another class with Slytherin.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup walked briskly down to the greenhouse for his Herbology lesson. He was somewhat relaxed as the greenhouse came in view. There were no desks in the greenhouse, just lots of tables with plants on them. Hiccup saw that several Gryffindors were already there, including the redhead from Charms.<p>

"Hey, Merida," Hiccup said, sliding up next to the girl. She seemed to be in a good mood as she greeted him.

They didn't have much time to talk as class started. A tall dark-haired woman entered the greenhouse, her hair dragging behind her like a cloak. \_Doesn't beat Rapunzel's hair though\_, thought Hiccup.

"Welcome to Herbology," the young woman said. "I am Seraphina Pitchiner and I shall be your instructor."

She continued the lesson by explaining that most of the first year would involve observation. Hiccup felt relieved. He actually stood a chance of passing this class. Not only was Hiccup good at observation, but Fishlegs had spent the last 10 years dragging him around Berk observing plants and dragons.

The lesson concluded with Professor Pitchiner asking the class to

identify some plants. Hiccup got them all right and actually won 10 points for Hufflepuff. He didn't think he'd be able to win any points.

As the students walked out of the greenhouse, Hiccup rejoined Merida. She seemed a little sour that she hadn't won any points for her house, but still in a generally good mood.

"Showoff," she accused lightly. Hiccup smiled. Astrid would have said the same thing, well, either showoff or nerd. Hiccup preferred the former.

Merida skipped forward. Hiccup had to quicken his step to keep up with her.

"So why are you so happy?" he asked as they reached the castle doors.

"No particular reason. I suppose it's just because I don't have Potions again 'til Friday."

"You don't like Potions? I thought it was fun."

"Eh, I guess the class itself is fine, it's just that Gryffindor shares with Slytherin."

"I don't think Slytherin is all bad."

"You haven't had a class with them yet, have you?"

"Yes, we had Defense Against the Dark Arts together."

"Then you didn't see their true colors. Those nasty Slytherins wouldn't try anything in the presence of a teacher who specialized in dark arts."

"Oh come on. You can't lump everybody into one group. I even spent time with one of them after class."

"You spent time with a Slytherin? Of your own free will? What on earth possessed you to do that?"

"I don't know, Jack seemed nice," Hiccup replied. Merida had been nice enough to him, but she was ready to blow now that they were talking about Slytherin.

"Jack?" Merida said softly, as though trying to place the name.

"You know, the boy who rode the boat across the lake with us," Hiccup supplied. He immediately regretted helping her remember the boy.

"THAT'S THE BOY YOU DON'T THINK IS BAD?!" Merida shouted, her face turning from red to purple. Hiccup threw up his hands in surrender and leaned away from her. Merida calmed down a little, but not by much, "He's the worst of the lot of them, an irresponsible, selfish, blood purist."

"Wait, you think he's a blood purist?" Hiccup asked. He knew

Slytherin had the reputation for it, but it was hard to believe a blood purist would have such little knowledge of the basic jinxes.

"OF COURSE he is," she said exasperated. "He just didn't show it around you because you're a pure blood."

Hiccup disagreed with her, but he didn't want to fight so he said nothing. After reaching the castle, Merida left with the Gryffindors leaving Hiccup on his own.

Merida had to be wrong. Hiccup hadn't told Jack his blood status, at least not until after they were hanging out. Then again, he couldn't remember telling Merida either. Was it that obvious he was from a magic family?

Shaking his head of those thoughts Hiccup followed the other Hufflepuffs back to the common room. Most of his classmates joined up in conversation or to work on homework together. Hiccup found himself sitting alone in a chair.

Some of the other students came up to talk to him, but Hiccup just couldn't get in a conversation with them. Eventually the other students stopped trying to talk to him.

Hiccup started to feel bored so he checked the clock, fifteen minutes until lunch. Glancing around and finding most of the other students absorbed in their own groups, Hiccup decided to get an early start on lunch.

As Hiccup left the common room, he spotted a boy sneaking around. Hiccup slowly followed him. As he got closer he realized it was Jack Frost. Hiccup almost called for him, but then remembered Merida's accusation.

Keeping his mouth shut, Hiccup followed Jack, hoping to see his true colors. Jack would glance over his shoulder every now and then, but Hiccup always managed to duck in time.

He didn't have to follow Jack too long to find out what he was up to; Jack was sneaking into the kitchen. Hiccup debated whether to follow him in or not. If Jack was merely getting food, he would see Hiccup and know he'd been followed, but if he was up to something more sinisterâ€¦?

Hiccup groaned, Merida must be rubbing off on him. Jack couldn't be up to anything sinister. There was nothing sinister about going into the kitchen. Jack was probably just too hungry to wait the fifteen minutes before lunch.

Sure enough Jack emerged with a plate of food not five minutes later. Hiccup felt ridiculous. Merida was completely wrong. Still, Hiccup watched as Jack ate. When Jack finished he disappeared back inside the kitchen.

Hiccup quietly snuck away, hoping Jack hadn't seen him. He headed down to the Great Hall. Jack had taken his time eating, the lunch hour was already half over. The Great Hall was almost empty. Hiccup was glad, fewer people to wonder why he was so late.



\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel skipped down to the Potions lab later that afternoon. Her face broke out into a huge smile when she caught sight of Hiccup waiting for her. Giving a quick wave, she raced toward him.<p>

"Hey, Rapunzel," he said softly.

"Hi," she responded as they walked into class together. "Are you alright? I didn't see you at lunch."

"We never see each other at lunch. I do sit at a different table, you know."

"Oh, I know," Rapunzel said softly, "but I usually see you coming in with all the Hufflepuffs."

"Well, I didn't today. Isn't that enough?" Hiccup snapped.

"Sorry." Rapunzel turned to face the Potions books. Why was Hiccup upset? They hadn't known each other long, but Rapunzel thought they were friends.

"I'm sorry, Rapunzel," Hiccup said softly putting his hand on her shoulder. Rapunzel looked at him. Hiccup continued, "It's justâ€¦I guess I'm a littleâ€¦homesick?"

Rapunzel relaxed, she understood homesick. She hadn't left her tower in eleven years. It was strange, fun and scary to be out in the world. Gently she took his hand, "It's okay, Hiccup. I'm homesick too."

Hiccup was about to say something back when the shadow next to him moved. Rapunzel let out a small scream before she realized the shadow was actually Professor Black.

"Poor child, so homesick," the professor said softly. "Before too long, you will be homesick for Hogwarts."

The professor stepped between the children leaning closer to Hiccup, "Unless of course, your friend was right, about that boy."

"What did you say?" Hiccup said sharply.

"Now, now, precious child, you wouldn't want to be mouthing off at a professorâ€¦would you? Especially not the professor of the one class you actually stand a chance of passing."

"Hiccup," Rapunzel said, "what's he talking about?"

"Oh, don't worry," Professor Black said, "by the time this school year is over, I'm sure everyone will know. Now if you'll excuse me, it's time for class to begin."

Professor Black stepped away from the boy and went to the front of the class to begin the lesson. Rapunzel eyed Hiccup during the lecture. He was upset, that was obvious, but she couldn't figure out if he was sad, angry, or maybe scared. She meant to ask him about the conversation, but Professor Black never gave them a chance to talk.

Hiccup bolted the second class was dismissed, leaving Rapunzel to stare after him, wondering why he was acting so oddly.

\* \* \*

><p>The next morning Jack Frost found himself reluctantly following the other Slytherins down to the greenhouse. They hadn't touched his stuff since the trunk incident. He wasn't sure if that was because they hadn't discovered his hiding spots or because they realized their stuff was just as vulnerable as his. Quite frankly, he didn't care.<p>

Still, the boys gave him glares and never passed an opportunity to gang up on him. Jack had spent most of yesterday avoiding them. He had managed to spend nearly the whole day practicing the few spells he knew. He considered going to the library to learn more spells, but decided against it. The fewer people who knew he was learning spells ahead of the class, the better.

The students slowed as they filed into the greenhouse. The Ravenclaws were already there. Jack watched them, some were mildly chatting, while others were inspecting the plants. But one girl in particular caught Jack's eye, the girl with the long blonde hair.

She was the girl who had nearly tipped the boat over in excitement on that first night. Jack couldn't quite remember her name, but he did recall that the sorting hat had called her a princess. It was just his luck that Hogwarts was in Merida's kingdom instead of the blonde's. Not that there was any guarantee Blondie would like him better than Merida, but the blonde seemed nicer.

Jack was interrupted from his thoughts by Seraphina Pitchiner. She introduced herself and gave a rundown of the way classes would be held before asking the students to identify some plants.

Jack studied the plant she held up. Before she had pointed it out he had thought it was an orange tree, but now that he was really looking at it, he could see the oranges were defying gravity.

The blonde girl raised her hand. Professor Pitchiner nodded at her and the girl said, "Is that a dirigible plumb tree?"

"You are correct." The teacher smiled in approval, then continued with the rest of the plants.

\* \* \*

><p>Merida listened tiredly to the Charms lecture. She had been excited to learn magic at first, but it all seemed so boring now, just rules, rules, rules. If Merida wanted rules she could have stayed at home and learned how to be a proper princess, just like her mum wanted.<p>

Merida had had to fight her mum to even go to Hogwarts. Queen Elinor wanted her to stay at home and learn to be a lady. It took Merida promising that she would devote herself to princess lessons over the summer before Elinor agreed to let her go.

Merida hoped the classes would get more exciting; she was looking

forward to actually being able to use her power. Still, she remembered how she had almost destroyed the Gryffindor common room; there wasn't much point in having power if she couldn't control it.

So reluctantly Merida straightened herself up and renewed her efforts to pay attention to the Charms lecture. Hiccup was sitting next to her and seemed to be drinking in every word the professor said. He was taking notes like there was no tomorrow.

Merida glanced at what Hiccup was writing; hoping to discover what he thought was so interesting about the lesson.

Merida stared at Hiccup's paper; she couldn't read a word of it. Not only was his lettering awkward and jagged, but they weren't letters like any Merida had ever seen before.

Merida went back to listening to the lecture, but that mysterious writing called to her. After the class was dismissed, Hiccup tried to leave with the Hufflepuffs but Merida grabbed his wrist.

"What?" Hiccup asked, staring at her.

"You're notes?" Merida started.

"What about them?" Hiccup replied, glancing back to the other Hufflepuffs who hadn't noticed that their comrade had been detained.

"What were you writing?" Merida asked.

"Huh?" Hiccup gave up on the rest of the house and turned to face Merida, "Look, I was just copying what the professor said. I wasn't the only one who was taking notes."

"No. Not the subject matter. I knew you were taking notes, I mean the script. I've never seen anything like that."

Merida released Hiccup's wrist but he didn't move. He looked at her, and then pulled a journal out of his vest. He opened it and showed her a page filled with the strange lettering.

"What is that language?" Merida asked.

"You mean the Runes?" Hiccup said, relaxing. "Everyone on Berk reads Runes. Well, at least those who read do."

"Runes? I've never heard of Runes before."

"Really? I suppose they are used more in the east, especially Norway, but I didn't think they were that rare here. I heard a fourth year talking about taking a class on the Magic of Runes."

Merida was about to retort when the clock chimed. Looking up, both Merida and Hiccup saw that they were late for their next class. Without a word they both dashed out and went their separate ways. Merida was thankful Defense Against the Dark Arts was on the same floor. If the teacher was late she might just make it on time. However, she had no such luck.

The class was all filled in; Merida saw Rapunzel was sitting next to an open seat. Bowing her head in shame, her cheeks flushing, Merida sat next to Rapunzel.

"Well, I see Princess Merida has finally decided to join us," the professor said. "Since this is your first class I shall not take any house points; however, should you be late again I will not be so kind."

Merida nodded and the professor began the lecture on curses.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack kept his eyes trained on the classroom door as History of Magic began. How could Hiccup be late? Jack supposed maybe he misjudged Hiccup. They only had one class together, after all, but Hiccup seemed to have a thirst for knowledge. Jack couldn't believe he was skipping class.<p>

Just as Jack was wondering if maybe Hiccup was avoiding him, the classroom doors opened and Hiccup came in. Professor Toothiana gave him a strange look but did not stop her lecture on the founding of Hogwarts.

Hiccup quietly sat next to Jack. His face red as a tomato. Jack stopped taking notes to write with his quill,\_"You OK?"\_

Hiccup read it and nodded, before turning his attention back to the professor. Jack watched Hiccup as he got out his paper, pen and ink without taking his attention off the lecture. Jack resumed taking notes as well.

As the lecture came to an end and students began filing out, Professor Toothiana came over to the boys.

"Is everything alright?" she asked Hiccup.

"Uh, yeah, fine. I'm sorry I was late."

"Are you sure you're ok?"

"Yeah, I just got a little held up in Charms. It won't happen again."

"Wellâ€¦if you're sure. You know, you can always come to any teacher if you have a problem."

"I'm fine. Really."

"Alright. I'll let you get to your next class then." Hiccup breathed a sigh of relief as the boys finally left the classroom.

"What happened?" Jack asked when they were safely out in the hall.

"Nothing. Why is this such a big deal for everybody? So I was late. It's not like I missed the whole class," Hiccup snapped. Jack recoiled.

"Look. I just got a little held up in Charms. I have to get back to

the common room. I have homework," Hiccup said.

"Do you need any help?" Jack asked. He was pretty sure Hiccup didn't need help, as he seemed to have a handle on all the spells, but he had been hoping they could study together again. Hiccup hesitated. For a minute Jack thought he was going to turn and run after the other Hufflepuffs.

"Sure," Hiccup finally answered with a sigh. Jack grinned.

"Great, I know just the place." Jack grabbed Hiccup's wrist and dragged him up the stairs to the small classroom. Hiccup hesitated before following Jack into the dusty room. Jack quickly ran to the pile of stacked furniture and moved two chairs out.

"Are you sure we're allowed to be here?" Hiccup asked.

"Wellâ€¦I didn't ask permission. But I'm sure it's fine. It's not like anybody is using this classroom. Look at that layer of dust," Jack said as he drew the curtains to let in some light. Hiccup still seemed a little nervous so Jack tried to change the subject, "So, Hiccup, have you had Herbology yet? I just had my first lesson. Tough stuff. I don't know how I'll ever be able to remember all those plants."

"Yeah, our lesson was yesterday. Most of those plants don't grow on Berk, but my best friend Fishlegs is really into botany and Herbology, so I don't have too much trouble."

"So what plants do grow on Berk?" Jack asked as the boys settled down into chairs. The boys' swapped tales of their interaction with plants all the way until the clock chimed, signaling the beginning of lunch. Hiccup started to go back the way they had come but Jack stopped him.

"I know a short cut," Jack explained. He led Hiccup to the secret passage behind the statue of the wizard and down to the kitchens. As soon as they reached the landing Hiccup turned to go to the Great Hall. Jack turned toward the kitchen.

"Aren't you coming to the Great Hall?" Hiccup asked.

"Nah, the food is fresher straight from the kitchen," Jack lied, not wanting to bring up the fact that he was an outcast among the Slytherins.

"Really?" Hiccup asked. "I'm kinda hungry now, want to show me how it works?"

"Sure!" Jack said, grinning as he led Hiccup to the kitchen. Eating with Hiccup had to be more fun than eating alone.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel sat quietly reading a book in the library. She and Merida had spent a little time working on the assignment for DADA together before Merida dashed off to join her fellow Gryffindors in a discussion of whether or not it would be OK to play Creaothceann on the school grounds.<p>

Rapunzel was drawn from her book by laughter. Peering through the shelving she saw the laughter was coming from Hiccup and another boy. Rapunzel started to get up and greet Hiccup when the other boy moved into view. It was the Slytherin boy Merida hated. Rapunzel froze and watched the boys.

"Shh, Jack, you don't want us to get kicked out again, do you?" Hiccup chided as the boy's laughter died down.

"Oh, come on, you can't tell me it wasn't fun," Jack replied, still giggling.

"OK, it was a little fun, but it won't be fun if we get kicked out of the library for good and have to spend the rest of the year begging our classmates to check out books for us so we can complete our homework."

"I don't know what you're so worried about. You know all the spells already."

"That's not true!" Hiccup protested quietly.

"You know all the good ones at least," Jack said. "I bet you ace every class."

"That's not very likely," Hiccup said, his smile vanishing.

"'Course it is," Jack said with a grin. "Not only will you ace every class, but you could be the greatest teacher Hogwarts has ever known."

"No, no, no. Even if that were possible, which it's not, I have to go back to Berk. All this training, and learning these spells, it's all to help my village."

"That's cool, then you'll be the greatest teacher on Berk."

"No, I can't teach anything."

"Are you kidding? You're the best teacher I've had so far. You taught me more in one afternoon than all my other classes combined. If it weren't for that unlocking charm you showed me, I might still be locked in that cabinet."

"You were locked in a cabinet?"

"Remember how during our first class all the other boys were late?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, I guess they wanted me to experience what it was like being late because before our next class they locked me in the cabinet."

"That's terrible."

"Not really, it was kind of fun to have a reason to try out the new spell. Besides, now no one can blame me if I prank them in retaliation. After allâ€¦they started it."

"I'm not so sure a prank war is such a good idea."

"Good idea or bad idea, it'll be fun. Besides, I've already had one detention, what's another one or two?"

"What did you get detention for?" Hiccup asked, his eyes going wide.

"You know that redheaded Gryffindor girl who can't speak English?"

"You mean Merida?" Hiccup asked.

"That's the one! Well, Professor Black caught us fighting on the train, and then there was that scene before the sorting. It was all her fault! But the professor took her side, even though he's head of my house, and gave me detention for fighting with her. You were with us during the sorting. Do you think I started that fight?"

Hiccup took a long pause, "I don't really remember. I was a too nervous about the sorting."

A clock chimed in the distance.

Jack frowned, "Guess it's almost time for Charms. I'll see you later." Jack dashed out of the library.

"Wait!" Hiccup called, "Don't you want that book I was telling you about?"

Jack apparently didn't hear Hiccup as he left the room and continued down the hall. Hiccup sighed and turned to look at the book shelf. Rapunzel stepped out. Hiccup smiled when he saw her.

"Are you really friends with that boy?" she asked softly.

"Yeah. He's nice," Hiccup said as he pulled a book off the shelf, "and he can be very funny."

"Merida said all Slytherins are evil, that boy in particular."

"She tried to tell me the same thing; I almost believed her, but the more time I spend with Jack, the less evil he seems."

"So you trust him?"

"You know, I think I do."

Rapunzel bit her lip.

Hiccup glanced down at the shelf then jumped, "Hey, Rapunzel, do you think you can do me a favor?"

"What?"

"You have Charms with Slytherin next, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Can you give Jack this book?" Hiccup pulled a book of counter curses off the shelf, "Getting this book was the reason we came to the library in the first place."

"Of course."

Hiccup checked the book out and handed it to Rapunzel. She took it and left the library heading to Charms.

As she entered, she saw the brown haired boy casually reclining in a chair at the back of the room tracing invisible patterns with his forefinger on the desk. Softly Rapunzel approached him. He didn't seem quite as mean as Merida had made him out to be.

"Excuse me," she mumbled.

The boy jumped and nearly flipped over his chair. Quickly regaining his composure, and giving her a grin that said 'I meant to do that' he turned to face the blonde girl.

"Oh, hi," he smiled. Definitely not evil behavior.

"Um, Hiccup asked me to give you this." She held out the book. The brown eyed boy read the title and took the book.

"Thanks, I forgot all about it."

Rapunzel debated whether to leave or not. Class would start soon so there was really no point to leaving; on the other hand it was rather awkward to be alone with a boy who might be evil. Swallowing her fear Rapunzel turned back to the boy.

"Why are you here so early?"

"Just trying to make up for being late during our first Charms class."

Rapunzel paused and bit her lip. "So—are you really friends with Hiccup?"

The boy's eyes widened and he looked up at her.

"Did—he really say that we were friends?"

"Yes."

His eyes lit up and his smile widened showing off his sparkling white teeth. Rapunzel giggled as she remembered how much her head of house loved teeth. If only Jack were in Ravenclaw. Rapunzel suddenly felt very at ease. "Don't you think of him as a friend?"

"Of course—but I wasn't sure how he felt. It wouldn't be the first time someone I thought was my friend turned his back on me. Right now, Hiccup is probably the only friend I have."

Rapunzel sat down beside him. Hiccup was right. "I'm Rapunzel."

"Jack Frost," he said.



\* \* \*

><p><strong>Finally they've all met, even if they aren't all friends yet. Well, it is only the first week. On a side note, this is about halfway through this story, give or take a chapter.<strong>

\*\*Just a reminder that the polls are still open. (I don't mean to be pushy, I just don't want people who want to vote to forget about it or have to back track too far.) So if you feel like voting, check out my profile for either the poll or the link.\*\*

## 10. The Flight

**\*\*The Flight\*\***

The next few days passed in a blur. Classes began to pile on the homework leaving the children very little free time. Hiccup would often join Jack for lunch in the kitchen and Rapunzel alternated between sitting with her Ravenclaw friends and sitting with Jack and, best of all, the other Slytherins were so busy they didn't have time to bother him.

Merida still gave him the cold shoulder in Potions and Transfiguration but even she was too busy to put a damper on his mood. In Transfiguration they actually got to start casting spells; it was a simple 'match into needle' but it temporarily took his mind off Merida.

By the end of class, Jack had managed to make the match head develop an eye. Not a great success, but better than Merida's. Her match appeared to turn into a needle, but then caught fire. Jack could not stop laughing to see a metal needle burning calmly and steadily as bright as her hair. Professor Bunnymund had to put it out before it burned her notes.

Most of his other classes still involved only taking notes or practicing wand movements, but Jack didn't care. He was pleased to have learned at least one spell. And it was a useful spell. Think of how happy his mother would be if her needle broke and she didn't have to go to the store to buy a new one.

But the thing Jack was most excited about was the flying lessons that would start on Wednesday. Yes, they were with Gryffindor, but he doubted that they'd be put into pairs or have to share desks. In fact the schedule specifically said lessons would be outside. Jack couldn't wait, he loved being outdoors.

That Wednesday Jack could hardly contain himself through the day. Potions class seemed to last an eternity, even Merida seemed to be looking forward to the flying lessons too much to insult him. As soon as class was over he darted out of the dungeons and up to the library, though he was much too excited to actually attempt homework. The flying lessons weren't until after lunch and Jack had no other classes to distract himself. Jack perched on the wide ledge under the window, passing the time tracing his fingers on the window, pretending that what he drew would appear.

Jack soon lost track of time as he imagined all the things he could be painting on the window. As he pretended to sketch, he listened in

on the quite conversations going on. For a library, there sure was a lot of talking. Most of it was mundane:

'How do you think you did on that test?'

'Do you remember the wand movement for that summoning charm?'

'I might skip class later today'

'Why didn't you write me over summer?'

'What do you mean you want to break up?'

Jack chuckled at some of the more hilarious conversations, such as a girl trying to convince her friend that copying wasn't cheating as long as they both got the right answers. Or a conversation from a boy who had apparently incinerated every book that started with the letter P.

Jack was pulled from his fun as he heard a voice he recognized. Glancing up, Jack saw it was Flynn Rider talking to the librarian. Jack hadn't seen Flynn since classes started, mostly because he was avoiding the Slytherin common room and dining table.

Jack watched as the librarian went into the restricted section to get Flynn a book. For a moment Jack considered confronting Flynn, but Jack couldn't move. Flynn had abandoned him, but not before warning him that this could happen. In the end Jack decided he didn't blame Flynn, if he had listened to Flynn's advice they would be friends, but he had ignored it. Giving a sigh Jack went back to tracing the window, pretending he hadn't seen Flynn.

The librarian returned and gave Flynn the book. Jack looked up once more as Flynn was leaving. Their eyes locked for a moment before Flynn shook his head and left the library. Jack pulled his knees up to his chest. He listened in on more conversations, but they didn't seem entertaining anymore. Tuning out the voices, Jack instead chose to look out the window at the ground below. Watching the wind blowing through the trees outside, Jack soon forgot all about seeing Flynn. It was a nice day so many of the older students who didn't have classes were roaming about. Jack watched as the wind grabbed a girl's hat and blew it to the outskirts of the forest.

"Hey," a familiar voice said. Jack nearly jumped out of his skin as Hiccup sat down next to him, "Been here long?"

"I guess," Jack said turning away from the window. "Where have you been?"

"Just got out of Herbology, after the flying lesson."

"You had flying? How was it? Was it awesome?"

"Awesome? No. I couldn't get my broom off the ground."

"Oh," Jack said with a sigh.

"Hey, I'm sure you'll do better. Maybe I just made the broom wrong, Rapunzel's broom worked, though she only got three feet off the ground."

"Wait, you make your own brooms?"

"Yeah, up until about a century ago everyone made their own brooms. I guess the school hasn't changed their curriculum. It's becoming more common to buy them from a broom maker but wizards who live in rural areas find it easier to make their own. I don't know. I think I'm happy I didn't fly. The comfort charm we put on the brooms didn't appear too comfortable, just more tolerable than sitting on a stick."

"I don't care how comfortable it is, just the feeling of being up off the ground and in the wind; it must be incredible." Jack closed his eyes imagining he was dancing with the wind over the trees, "Okay, so tell me everything!"

Hiccup and Jack passed the rest of the morning, lunch and the first part of the afternoon with Hiccup describing in excruciating detail everything they did to make the brooms. Jack hung on every word. Hiccup also explained that even though his entire village was comprised of wizards and witches they rarely flew because the trees that grew on the island weren't suitable for flying. Flying also wasn't popular because of the dragon attacks. It was one thing to have your house, or unluckily yourself, catch fire on the ground surrounded by ocean and wells, but if your broom caught fire and you were 50 feet above ground, you're dead.

By the time the boys split up for their three o'clock classes, Jack was feeling very confident about flying. He marched down to the open field reserved for flying. To his surprise he was not the first student in class despite being over ten minutes early. It seemed the other students were just as excited to fly.

As they waited for the professor to show up, the students chatted about their past flying experiences. Jack halfheartedly listened to the Slytherins brag until Derek gave him an evil look and said loudly, "My friends and I were always chasing out muggles on our brooms, serves those losers right."

Jack balled his fists, wishing Hiccup had taught him how to cast a real curse instead of just focusing on the counter curses. Turning away from the cluster of Slytherins, Jack decided to listen to the Gryffindors. Their talk was much the same, though none of them seemed to be targeting muggles. To his surprise Merida wasn't talking much. She seemed like the type who would be bragging, though he vaguely remembered one of the Slytherins mentioning her parents were muggles so he supposed she didn't have any stories to brag about.

Soon the chatter was interrupted by the arrival of the professor, Wilhelm Grimm. The professor introduced himself, mentioning his brother Jacob taught Charms.

"Are you all ready to fly?" the professor asked. The students responded enthusiastically as Wilhelm led them to a pile of wood. He turned to address the class, "Step one, picking your wood. I have mahogany and oak. There are other broom woods; however, I do not have any with me."

He stepped aside and the students picked out their broom bases. Jack raced with the other students for the best broom. Every time he

reached out for one another student got to it first. His hands finally locked around a stick, he started to pull it out of the pile only to realize Merida had the other end. Jack let go. Merida gave him an odd look. Jack just shook his head as he reached for the only stick left.

It was easy to see why no one had picked this stick, the end of it curved around; almost in the shape of a G. All in all it looked more like a shepherd's crook than a broomstick. Jack wondered if the odd end would affect it's flight pattern. What ever happened, it would be fun.

"Alright," Professor Wilhelm said after everyone had their sticks, "I have already soaked the wood in a potion overnight to ensure that what we do today will stick, but before we can begin casting the charms that will enable the brooms to fly, you need to attach twigs. The twigs are very important because the twigs are what make it a broom. I have hazel twigs with me, if you decide to pursue flying as more than just transportation you may wish to look into other twigs."

The professor handed each student a handful of twigs and a bit of twine. The students went to work. Jack surveyed his staff. It was hard to decide if the curve should be on the bottom or top. In the end he decided it would be difficult to attach the twigs to the curved end so the G became the top.

When everyone had finished preparing their brooms the professor showed them how to perform the basic charms to make the brooms fly. Each student attempted to cast the spells: one for go, one for stop, one for up, one for down, one for speed, one for slow, and one to make it turn around. And the last charm, a charm for comfort.

Professor Wilhelm had every student attempt the spells. As Jack cast the spells he felt a tingle in his broom. Before being allowed to take off, the professor checked everyone's brooms, double checking that all the spells had been applied properly.

Very few of the students had actually cast spells before, so it came as no surprise that Professor Wilhelm had to recast the spells on most of the brooms. Some students had managed to cast one or two spells but not the rest. Jack couldn't help laughing as the professor informed Derek that the only spells he'd cast successfully were down and stop. Merida's broom wasn't much better. She had enchanted it with the spells for speeding up, and going up, as well as stop, leaving out the ability to slow down or come down. In fact, it seemed like everyone had missed at least one charm, if not all of them.

When Jack handed his broom to Professor Wilhelm, Wilhelm examined it with pleasure, announcing to the class that Jack was the only student to have cast all eight spells successfully. Jack beamed; Derek and Merida's glares just made his victory all the sweeter.

The second half of the class consisted of the actual flying lesson. Professor Wilhelm instructed them to lay their brooms down on the right side. He gave a brief lecture on broom safety before letting the kids try to call their brooms. The word 'up' was barely out of his mouth before Jack's broom was in his hand. Jack watched as the

other brooms jumped into their owner's hands. Merida's broom flew up fairly quickly, but Derek's didn't seem to want to join him, doing somersaults on the ground. Jack chuckled.

Everyone mounted their brooms, with the professor correcting each student's posture and grip. As soon as he was sure no one would fall he gave the signal to take flight.

Jack's broom took off, the wind rushing through his hair, his feet off the ground. Even though he was only a few feet up, it was the most fun Jack had ever had.

They weren't supposed to go high. They were supposed to practice starting and stopping, playing with speed only when they became comfortable with sitting on the broom without falling off.

It started small. Jack's broom hovered an inch above the other students. Merida inched her broom up so she was the highest. Never one to back down from a game, Jack was quick to regain the advantage. Merida smirked at him as she rose five more inches. Jack leaned back, pulling above her by an inch. She clenched her teeth and zoomed up, nearly 10 feet. Jack pulled back on his broom intending to surpass her.

"Get down here this instant or you're both out of this class!" Professor Wilhelm shouted. Jack stopped in mid-air and turned to go back down. As his feet grazed the ground he glanced back at Merida. Her broom was still going up.

"GET BACK DOWN HERE!" the professor shouted again. Merida made no move to come down. Focusing his eyes, Jack realized her broom wasn't moving in the controlled smooth pattern it had closer to the ground. It was jerking around, bucking wildly. As he watched, a strong breeze came and tousled his hair. But what was just a gentle breeze on the ground was a gale for Merida. Jack watched in horror as she lost her grip on the broom as it flipped over. The broom zoomed off as Merida fell toward the earth below.

Instinct took over. Jack ignored the cries of other students as he zoomed up with a speed he never knew was possible. Keeping one hand on his broom he reached out and caught Merida around her waist before she had even fallen three feet.

For one brief moment he was very pleased with himself. But the sudden addition of seventy pounds threw his broomstick out of balance, causing it to tumble and turn in the wind. Still Jack managed to hang on, keeping his grip on Merida as the strong wind blew the broom over the school. Amid the chaos of falling, Jack managed to tilt the broom down, but he had lost all sense of direction. It wasn't long before the two students crashed into the forest adjacent to the school.

Jack slowed the broom down before the landing, but not enough, apparently. As they fell through the trees his broom snapped in half. As soon as it broke all flying power ceased, letting the children fall the rest of the way down, crashing into nearly every branch of the pine they landed in.

Slowly Jack stood up, testing every limb. He would have some bruising and cuts from the fall, but nothing felt broken. Sure that he was

fine, Jack laughed softly. He was wrong about flying being the funnest thing ever; blowing uncontrollably in the wind was way better.

Glancing around, Jack found Merida lying still a few feet away in the dark forest. He ran to her. Relief flooded through him when he saw her chest moving up and down slowly. She was breathing. Despite their ongoing battle he would never wish her dead. Gently Jack shook her shoulder. Merida stirred.

"Mum?" she mumbled. Jack chuckled.

"I don't think so, princess." Her eyes flashed open and she scrambled back.

"What's th' idea? Watchin' me sleep?" she shouted.

"Well, excuse me for wanting to check if you were alive. Remind me not to save you next time."

"Oh, I would have been fine!"

"Yeah, sure, because everyone survives 50 foot falls," Jack said sarcastically as he scanned the forest, taking in their surroundings. Thick trees surrounded them with no obvious paths back to the castle. "You didn't happen to catch which way the castle was as we were falling, did you?"

"How could I notice th' castle wi' th' way you were flying!" she snapped.

"The way I was flying? How about the way you were flying? At least I didn't fall off my broom!"

"No, you had ta' go an' break yer broom, strandin' us in the middle of th' forest!"

"Hey! You threw off my flight pattern!"

"Right, of course th' high winds had nothing ta do wi' it!" Merida shouted.

"I was doing fine!" Jack yelled, his voiced getting louder with each word, "If you hadn't -"

Jack was interrupted as a low growl emitted from the bushes. The students froze, for the first time noticing the creeping shadows surrounding them.

"Mor'du," she whispered stepping closer to Jack.

"What?" Jack said as he closed the distance between them.

"Th' renegade bear. Took my da' leg clean off."

The growl emitted again, followed by a strange pounding sound. Jack paused. The noise sounded oddly familiar.

"I don't think that's any bear."

Another sound emitted a high pitch whinny.

"And I suppose ya'd be an expert," Merida said, her voice trembling in fright. More of the pounding sound which Jack finally recognized as hoof beats.

"Bears don't have hooves, do they?" As he said it a dark shape darted out of the trees. It was not a bear.

It took all of Jack's effort not to scream in the face of the big black horse. Its wild golden eyes bore into the children. It took Jack a moment to notice the horse's teeth were bared because even they were pitch black. The horse circled them, its mane and tail leaving whips of sand. This was no ordinary horse.

Merida screamed and the horse lunged at her. Jack and Merida jumped out of the way just in time. The horse snarled and reared up posing to strike again.

"Ruuun!" Jack shouted grabbing Merida's hand and pulling her through the trees. Merida didn't need to be told twice. She gathered her skirt in one hand and the students took off.

Jack jumped through trees, over roots, and under low branches with ease. Merida trailed a bit behind but didn't seem terribly hindered by the pace or the trees. The only reason she wasn't ahead of Jack was because the back of her skirt kept getting caught on loose branches.

They ran until they couldn't hear the terrible neighing of the nightmarish horse behind them. Jack and Merida braced themselves against the trees as they caught their breath.

"Wh-what was tha'?" Merida asked when she had recovered.

"That has got to be the scariest horse I've ever seen," Jack said panting.

"That couldn't have been a horse. It wasn't anything like Angus. It had no hair, it was all shiny and sandy, and I've never seen a horse with glowin' eyes. When it looked at meâ€¦it was like a nightmare."

"We can figure out what it was later. Right now I'd like to focus on getting out of here before it catches up." Merida nodded. The first time they'd agreed on anything. Jack looked around at the unfamiliar trees, "Do you have any ideas?"

"The castle is west of the forest, right?" Merida said slowly.

"I think so, not that I ever paid that much attention," Jack answered.

"Let's assume that it is, then all we have to do is figure out which way is west and keep going in a straight line."

Jack looked around. There was no moss growing on the trees to indicate a direction so he turned to the shadows. Even in mid afternoon they were long and dark, creeping up around the children. It was hard to tell which direction they were pointing.

"I could climb the tree until I see which way the light is coming from," Jack suggested. Merida scanned the shadows and trees as she nodded.

Jack scrambled up the nearest tree. He'd done this many times before, though never when there was any real danger like that horse. Most of the time it was just for fun; part of a game he played with his sister.

Jack had to climb halfway up before he felt the light touching his skin. Even so Jack kept climbing until he could see over the trees. Looking to the west Jack could just make out the outline of the castle.

Merida was right. Jack was about to scramble down and tell her when he saw something else in the skies over the forest. Shielding his eyes from the sun with one hand he could just make out the outline of a man on a broom. It must be Professor Wilhelm!

Jack called down to Merida, telling her to climb up, then tried to get the professor's attention. It took several minutes of jumping around wildly on the branch and waving his arms before the broom turned and zoomed towards Jack.

Merida had just finished climbing up when the professor came into clear view. Jack was pleased to see another broom tethered to the teacher's broom. Professor Wilhelm pulled Merida up onto his broom letting Jack climb aboard the spare broom.

Silently the three flew back to the field. The rest of the class was gone. Merida and Jack dismounted as Professor Wilhelm began his lecture.

"What do you think you were doing?!" he hissed. Jack stared at his feet. "I specifically told you to come down!"

"I couldn't hear you," Merida said.

"I did come down," Jack said.

"You didn't stay down," Wilhelm reprimanded.

"I saw her fall; I was only trying to help," Jack said.

"Mr. Frost, I know it may seem shocking to you, but I happen to know a great many spells, including several that would have enabled me to catch Miss Dunbroch without the need for a trip to the Dark Forest!"

"Oh," Jack said softly. The thought that there might be a spell to catch her had not even occurred to him.

"And Miss Dunbroch, not being able to hear me is a poor excuse when I told you at the start of class not to attempt heights," Professor Wilhelm scolded. "Besides injuring yourselves, you caused me to dismiss the class early, and we lost both your brooms."

"Waitâ€¦you lost my broom?" Merida asked.



"It went flying off the second you let go."

"We have to go get it back!" Merida said.

"Get it back? I don't think so. I have half a mind not to let either of you near a broom again." Merida and Jack stared in shock. Now that Jack had felt the wind blowing through his hair he didn't think he'd ever want to come down again.

"Isn't there another way?" Jack pleaded. "We could ... I don't know ... help keep the field clean or something? Maybe polish all the brooms?"

Professor Wilhelm thought for a moment, "Hmph, I do hate to ground someone with so much raw potential. But you're still in trouble. Ten points from Gryffindor and Slytherin. You'll both have to stay after class each day to perform broom maintenance. And if there is any further mischief, you will be kicked out of the class without a second thought."

Jack nodded. Losing a few points and helping with the brooms didn't sound terrible. In fact Jack was glad for the opportunity to work more with brooms. It would be the first time he had a legitimate reason for not hanging out with the other Slytherins, even if it did mean he'd be stuck with Merida.

Professor Wilhelm dismissed the children, ordering them to stop by the infirmary before going up to dinner. Slowly Jack and Merida walked together in silence, neither sure which way the infirmary was.

Jack looked at Merida, for the first time noticing a tear in her sleeve stained dark with blood. Come to think of it her whole arm was drooping a little. He wondered if it was from the fall or the chase.

He had to hand it her, she'd been much better at running through the forest, climbing trees, and fighting evil horses than he would expect from a stuck-up spoiled princess. Not that he would ever say that out loud. He gave her a sly smile as they reached the infirmary. Maybe Merida wasn't so bad.

\* \* \*

><p>The Nurse immediately diagnosed Merida as having a dislocated shoulder and some cuts and bruises, injuries easily fixed with a wave of the wand. As soon as the nurse released her, Merida raced down to the Great Hall, not waiting to see Jack's prognosis.<p>

He had to be fine. After all, he wasn't the one knocked unconscious from the fall. Besides, from the way he ran through that forest you'd think he lived in a tree. But that's ridiculous. From the way the other Gryffindors talked about Slytherins she was under the impression that they were all rich snobs.

As soon as she sat down at the Gryffindor dinner table she was besieged with questions about the Dark Forest. Even the older students who had heard of the missing girl leaned in to hear the story.

"Merida! How far in the forest did you get?"

"What was it like being that high on the broom?"

"How did you find your way out?"

"Did you see any centaurs?"

"Were you stuck with the Slytherin the whole time?"

"Aye," Merida answered.

"I'll bet he was scared he'd get expelled if he ditched you," a first year boy said.

"Serves him right. You shoulda tried to ditch him," a second year said. Merida said nothing as the conversation turned to trying to expel Slytherins.

It was true she was no fan of them, that boy in particular, but as much of a jerk as he was, it's not like he was trying to knock her into the forest. In fact if he had dropped her he might have been able to keep his broom from crashing, and breaking. He hadn't even tried to push the blame on her when they got in trouble like she had expected.

No, her friends were right. He was only trying to save himself. It must not have occurred to him to put the blame on her or he would have. He was evil, all Slytherins were.

As dinner wrapped up, Merida scanned the other tables. Rapunzel was laughing with some of the other Ravenclaws. Hiccup was actually at the Hufflepuff table. He didn't seem to be enjoying the other Hufflepuffs' company though. In fact, he hardly seemed to notice as they filed out. He kept his eyes trained on the Slytherin table.

Merida followed his line of vision. She was surprised when she didn't recognize any of the faces. Jack was not among the Slytherins. But what surprised her more was Hiccup's actions. He waited until most of students had left the Great Hall before getting up and marching over to a young Slytherin boy. Merida couldn't hear what they were saying but Hiccup looked angry. He and the boy continued their conversation for a while before the Slytherin pointed to her.

Merida immediately dropped her gaze, her face flushing. Hiccup walked around the hall and stood directly opposite her. Merida looked up, wondering if he thought she was eavesdropping.

"Merida, where's Jack?" Hiccup demanded. The forcefulness in his voice surprised her. He seemed so easy going and wimpy before.

"How should I know? I'm not th' numpty's keeper," Merida said avoiding Hiccup's gaze. "Besides, he never eats here anyway."

"He usually eats with me but he didn't show up tonight. Look, I know you don't like him, but the other Slytherins said he was last seen with you in the Dark Forest. Is he still stranded out there?"

"Why should you care? He's a no-good Slytherin. You shouldn't trust

him!"

"Well, I do. And if you won't tell me where he is I suppose I'll have to go out to the forest and look for him myself."

"You're crazy. Tha' forest is nigh but danger. It was scary even in th' daytime. I'd hate to be there at night. Besides, he's not out there. I left him with the nurse in the infirmary." Hiccup glared at her before storming off, presumably to the infirmary.

As Merida sank into bed that night she couldn't stop thinking about the adventure in the forest. Why didn't Jack abandon her when the horse attacked? It was only going after her. From the way he dashed around the forest it was clear he could have outrun the monster, yet he waited for her, helped her even.

She hadn't thanked him for that. She hadn't even thanked him for catching her when she fell. As she drifted into an uneasy sleep, her thoughts turned to the monstrous horse. As the night wore on Merida found herself in a nightmare where the horse turned into Mor'du.

\* \* \*

><p>The next morning Hiccup refused to speak to Merida during their Charms lesson. By the time he had gotten to the infirmary, Jack had already left. Hiccup had scoured the school, from the kitchens all the way up to the empty classroom Jack liked to practice in. Jack wasn't anywhere to be found.<p>

If it weren't for the fact that the nurse had said Jack had been there, Hiccup might have gone out looking for him in the Dark Forest. Hiccup had interrogated the other Slytherin boys at breakfast, hoping they would know where Jack was, but either they lied to him or they had no clue. Even the house elves in the kitchen hadn't seen Jack.

As soon as Charms was dismissed Hiccup raced to the History of Magic classroom. To his immense relief Jack was there, propped up in his usual chair looking a little tired but no worse for wear. Hiccup casually strolled over.

"Hey, Hiccup," Jack said cheerily.

"Jack, where have you been? Nobody could find you."

"Huh? Oh, I got stuck in the infirmary overnight. No big deal."

"I checked with the infirmary when you didn't come down for dinner, the nurse said you weren't hurt."

"I wasn't, well, except for a few bruises. She had a magic salve that cleared those right up, even my black eye." Jack pointed to his now normal colored brown eye, "I kinda asked her if I could stay. I saw the beds and I was tired. I just didn't feel like facing the other Slytherins."

"I wonder why she didn't tell me?" Hiccup said more to himself than to Jack.

"Youâ€|you came looking for me?" Jack asked hesitantly.

"Of course. When you didn't show up for dinner in the kitchens I thoughtâ€¦well, I thought maybe your roommates had locked you in another cabinet, or worse."

"I didn't think anyone would notice if I was missing," Jack said softly. "I didn't think anyone cared."

"We're friends. Of course I care." Jack smiled a little as Professor Toothiana arrived and started class.

## 11. Halloween

**\*\*Halloween \*\***

It did not take long for the story of the hectic flight to circulate the school but Rapunzel didn't learn of it until mid-morning on Friday, nearly two days after the event. Worse, by the time she heard it from a fifth year Ravenclaw girl, the rumor was that a Slytherin boy had kidnapped the Princess Merida.

Rapunzel knew this couldn't be true. She and Merida had shared a Defense Against the Dark Arts class only yesterday. Merida hadn't mentioned being in the forest at all. Rapunzel wished she had known earlier. She could have asked Hiccup during Transfiguration earlier that morning, or better yet, she could have asked Merida yesterday.

Rapunzel looked at the clock. Only ten minutes until Potions with Hufflepuff. Maybe Hiccup knew the truth to the rumors and, if he didn't, she could try to ask Merida at lunch. Rapunzel slipped out of the common room and headed down to the Potions dungeon.

As she descended the staircase, she ran into several Gryffindor and Slytherin students. Rapunzel considered asking one of them about the rumors but decided against it. Even though Jack Frost was nice, Hiccup, as well as the rest of the student body, seemed wary of the other Slytherins. Rapunzel was a bit afraid to ask them. The Gryffindors, though generally nicer, were known for their habit of believing any rumor that reflected negatively on the Slytherins. Rapunzel doubted she would get the truth out of either house unless she asked the students directly involved.

Unfortunately Rapunzel had no idea which Slytherin boy was the culprit and she did not pass Merida on her way down. By the time Rapunzel reached the Potions room, only one student remained. Jack Frost.

Rapunzel considered marching up to him and demanding answers. He didn't seem the type to lie, but then she remembered how much Merida hated him. No doubt the rivalry was mutual. Rapunzel bit her lip as Jack finally walked out of the Potions room. No need to spread the rumor, especially to someone who might use it to humiliate Merida.

Jack gave Rapunzel a lopsided grin when he passed her, but didn't stop to chat. Well, nothing to do now but wait for Hiccup. Rapunzel sat quietly in her usual spot. Even though the room was empty, Rapunzel had the strange feeling something was watching her. Her eyes

wandered over the desolate dungeon. Were the shadows always this dark? As she watched, they seemed to stretch even further.

Rapunzel absentmindedly stroked her hair as the shadows moved, thinking of the candles she made back in the tower. Of course the school was normally well lit, all but the dungeons, so she hadn't bothered to bring any with her.

Rapunzel pulled at the base of her braid, less than two weeks and it was already loose. Hopefully everyone else dismissed the change as gravity and bedhead taking effect, and not as a few inches worth of growth. Rapunzel was so intent on her hair she didn't notice the shadow creeping up behind her. So when a pale hand lightly gripped her shoulder, Rapunzel let out a high-pitched squeak.

The hand quickly receded. Rapunzel turned to see Hiccup's shocked face.

"Sorry," Rapunzel said quickly, offering him a small smile. "It's so dark in here; I just got a littleâ€|jumpy. I didn't think you'd be here so early."

"I guess I did get here early. I was hoping to catch Jack before he left."

"Sorry, you just missed him. You might be able to catch up."

"Nah, I just wanted to make sure he was ok. This was his first class with Gryffindor after the incident."

"You mean that thing about Merida being kidnapped? What does that have to do with Jack?"

"Kidnapped?! Jack did not kidnap her!" Hiccup said fiercely.

"Then what happened?"

"It was just a stupid accident. When I asked her about it, even Merida admitted that she was too high. They were out on brooms and the wind blew them straight into the Dark Forest."

Rapunzel gasped. Mother Gothel had expressly forbidden her to go anywhere near the forest, let alone set foot in it. Gothel had warned her ruffians, thugs, poisoned ivy, quicksand, cannibals, snakes, large bugs and men with pointy teeth all lurked in the forest.

"Whaâ€|what happened? Did they run into ruffians? Or thugs?"

"What? No, I don't think any humans live in the forest. They did see something strange though." Hiccup paused, "They said it was like a skeletal horse."

"A thestral?" Rapunzel supplied.

"I don't think so. I've had a chance to talk to both of them and neither one can remember ever seeing anyone die. Besides, this horse had no wings, and they said it was a little grainy. I've never heard of a grainy horse."

"Hm, I haven't seen many magical creatures, but I've read about them. I can't think of anything that looks like that. I wonder what it  
\_"

"Don't!"

Rapunzel and Hiccup both jumped as the forceful voice came out of the shadows. Professor Pitch Black came into view.

"But professor -" Rapunzel started.

"There are a great many creatures living in the Dark Forest. I would not advise either of you to concern yourselves over one of those silly little animals."

"Butâ€|what if it's dangerous?" Hiccup asked uncertainty.

"It most assuredly is. Which is why all students would be well advised to stay out of the forest. Have either of you told anyone else of this beast?"

"No," Hiccup said.

"Good. The forest is filled with dangers, the last thing I want is for some poor soul to overhear you discussing this monster and decide to seek it out. Why, if that happened, I would have to suspend you both. Now, who was it exactly that saw the beast?"

"They aren't in trouble, are they?" Rapunzel asked.

"Absolutely not. I just want to make sure that they know not to tell anyone about what they saw there. I can see I'm a bit late, but I still might be able to stop this from spreading."

"You know, I could just tell them not to mention it," Hiccup said. Professor Pitch practically hissed.

"You could, but then if they choose not to listen to you, you'll be the one in trouble for spreading it," Pitch sneered. "And while the other students might get off with a suspensionâ€|well, considering your lack of abilities, they may just jump to expelling. I wonder if your father could really accept you then? I know I wouldn't if you were my son. Anyway, I doubt it will mean trouble for your friends, I only want to warn them."

Hiccup hesitated before answering, "Merida of Dunbroch and Jack Frost."

Pitch gave the children a sick smile before retreating into the shadows as though he'd never been there. Hiccup shuddered.

"Man, that teacher gives me the creeps," he said as soon as they were sure Pitch had really gone.

"Really? He does pop out at the oddest moments, but I don't think he's too bad. He kinda reminds me of Mother Gothel. He's just warning us of the dangers outside, trying to keep us safe."

"Iâ€|I guess. I hope we didn't get Merida and Jack in trouble," Hiccup said.

"The Professor might have known Merida was involved. It seems that everyone knows she had some kind of adventure in the forest."

"That did get around fast, didn't it?"

"Yeah, but only Meri-" Rapunzel stopped talking as the rest of the class filed in. Both students stayed silent as Professor Black started the lesson.

\* \* \*

><p>As soon as class was out, Hiccup and Rapunzel split up to find Jack and Merida and warn them about Professor Black. Hiccup easily found Jack by the kitchens. As they ate lunch together Hiccup filled Jack in on what had transpired during Potions.<p>

Jack didn't seem too worried. In fact he seemed surprised that Professor Black didn't already know. He figured the flying instructor would have told Pitch Black already, seeing as he was the head of Slytherin.

Jack promised to tell Hiccup what happened when Professor Black confronted him, but it never came. Hiccup was deeply puzzled. Black had specifically said he wanted to talk to Jack.

Jack dismissed it, "He probably knows I only hang out with you and sometimes Rapunzel. Who else would I tell?"

Merida also had not been contacted by the professor, though she did mention getting a scolding from her Head of House, Professor Bunnymund. Even Rapunzel thought Hiccup was making too big a deal out of it.

"Perhaps Professor Black changed his mind when he found out they were already punished."

Still, Hiccup couldn't shake the feeling that something was off. But with every class piling on more and more homework, in addition to tutoring Jack and struggling to perform even the most basic spells, Hiccup had very little time to think about the strange behavior, let alone investigate.

In fact Hiccup hardly noticed time passing. So when he woke up to smell something wonderful, probably delicious, one Wednesday morning, he couldn't figure out why. He practically raced to the kitchen, where the smell was wafting in from.

To his surprise Jack was not there. Unusual. Jack was almost always there early. A house elf offered Hiccup a slice of warm bread. Hiccup bit into the unusual orange food. The house elf explained that all the orange food was pumpkin, and it was intended to celebrate Halloween.

Hiccup was surprised to discover that pumpkin was real; on Berk it was assumed to be an imaginary vegetable, much like the potato. The house elf assured him that Professor Bunnymund had brought the plants here himself.

Hiccup munched on the pumpkin bread while waiting for Jack. The time

marched on, but Jack did not appear. Finally he gave up and went to see if Jack was in the Great Hall.

The Great Hall was decorated in orange, with carved vegetables ('Pumpkins' another student informed him). Candles floated above the tables and plates full of apples were arranged between the piles of orange food. Hiccup scanned the Slytherin table. Jack was not among them, but to his surprise, neither were any of the other first year boys.

It was possible they had already gone up to class. Hiccup frowned. Today was Wednesday, he didn't have any classes with Slytherin on Wednesday. Hiccup turned to the Gryffindor table, intent on asking Merida to check up on Jack for him. To his great surprise, Merida was not at the Gryffindor table.

Hiccup sank down at the Hufflepuff table. Where could Merida and Jack be? Surely they weren't together? Hiccup hadn't seen them together since the Sorting Ceremony, though both could spend hours complaining about the other.

The last time Jack disappeared he wound up in the infirmary. Hiccup wondered if he should check there. Before he could move to action on that, though, the clock chimed signaling the start of class.

\_I'll check the infirmary after Flying lessons,\_ he decided.

Hiccup followed the other Hufflepuffs outside, breaking off as soon as he spotted Rapunzel. She gave a light wave, her long golden hair flying back in the chilly autumn wind.

"Happy Halloween!" she said softly as they met up.

"Um, yeah," he answered halfheartedly.

"Ok. What's wrong? Don't you like Halloween?" she asked.

"We don't really celebrate it on Berk. Anyway, have you seen Merida or Jack?"

"No, we only just had breakfast. I won't have a class with either of them until tomorrow. Is something wrong?"

"Maybe," Hiccup could not elaborate as Professor Wilhelm Grimm arrived. By now almost everyone had mastered the basics of flying. Everyone, that is, except for Hiccup. He stepped up to the left side of his broom, put his right hand over the broom and shouted, "Up."

Nothing happened. Hiccup hadn't managed to do any of the enchantments on his broom himself, they were all preformed by the Professor, so it couldn't be the spells. He shouted "UP" again, this time louder.

Nothing happened. Hiccup looked around. All the other students were well off the ground, practicing twills, and other tricks, a few of them even broke off to practice a game of growing popularity in the wizarding world, though not on Berk, 'Quiddich', though they didn't have a Snidget to hunt.



Hiccup tried again to make his broom leap to his hand but it remained motionless and ground bound. He wondered vaguely what his father or Gobber would have done in this situation.

"\_Yell at it louder,'" Gobber's voice screamed in his head. Hiccup screamed as loud as he could but nothing happened. Even Professor Grimm had given up on him. The first few classes, after witnessing Hiccup's failed attempts to raise the broom, he would go and lift it, then hand it off to Hiccup, but today the Professor seemed content to act as referee in the game.

Collapsing on the grass, Hiccup gave up trying to fly, it was clear he was never going to feel the wind in his hair soaring above buildings and landscapes—oh well; it would be too dangerous on Berk anyway, with all the dragon attacks. None of the other Berkians minded being grounded.

Hiccup watched the game progress, Rapunzel tried to join in, but her hair created a certain amount of drag, making it hard for her to turn the broom or go as fast as the other students.

Hiccup gave a small chuckle as she turned her hair into a weapon, twirling it around like a lasso. The large braid acted as a defensive shield, knocking away any ball that came close. The Ravenclaws quickly made her the Catcher.

The game lasted the rest of class; Rapunzel made an excellent Catcher, her braided hair was nearly as long as the goal post, but it was also somewhat heavy. She couldn't maneuver it as quickly, letting a few balls slip past. Those few goals won the match for Hufflepuff. Hiccup congratulated Rapunzel as she landed before he had to follow the Hufflepuffs to Herbology.

Entering the greenhouse he looked around for Merida. There was no trace of her. He half-heartedly paid attention to today's lesson (on Devils Snare) hoping she would show up late, but she never came.

Now Hiccup was starting to worry. No one had ever missed class—not the whole class at least. As soon as Seraphina Pitchiner dismissed the class, Hiccup bolted up to the infirmary. To his dismay, it was empty save one fifth year girl who appeared to have a severe cold.

Hiccup asked the older student if any first years had been up this way, but all he got was a shake of the head. Sighing in defeat, Hiccup wandered up to the empty classroom he and Jack practiced in. He supposed he should have asked one of the Gryffindors about Merida. It hadn't occurred to him at the time and now it was too late. The other students had probably all gone up to the common room.

As Hiccup approached the empty classroom he wasn't really expecting to find anyone. So it was much to his surprise when he suddenly found his legs locked together. Hiccup toppled over.

He pulled himself into a sitting position only to see Jack looking concerned.

"Sorry, I wasn't expecting anyone up here," Jack said as he performed the counter curse, releasing Hiccup's legs. Shakily Hiccup got to his feet.

"I missed you at breakfast," Hiccup said as he steadied himself.

"Sorry about thatâ€¦I was unavoidably detained. I was almost late for Potions. I'm glad I made it though. I would have hated to miss the one lesson where Merida wasn't bothering me."

Hiccup froze, "Merida didn't show?"

"Nope. I only hope she doesn't come for flying either. It's been a nightmare sharing a broom with her. She always hogs it. I am so looking forward to not having to switch off with her."

"Where do you think she is? I know she's a bit impulsiveâ€¦but cutting class just doesn't seem like her."

"Don't know, don't care," Jack said as he resumed practicing wand movements.

"Jackâ€¦I can't shake the feeling that Merida is in trouble. You can stay here and keep practicing, but I'm going to go look for her."

Jack lowered his wand, "No, no. I owe it to help you after all you've done for me. I had to use some of those counter-jinxes this morning. I'll help you look."

"Great!" Hiccup said brightly as the two boys left the classroom. They headed down to the library first. Hiccup was hoping to run into a Gryffindor who might be able to check the common room for them.

Looking around the library, Hiccup could not find a single Gryffindor. Just as he and Jack were about to leave, he spotted Rapunzel holed up in a window seat reading. She smiled brightly and waved them over.

"Hey, I see Jack is fine. Does that mean you found Merida too?" Rapunzel asked. Quickly Hiccup explained what they were doing. Rapunzel put her book away and vowed to help them.

Rapunzel led the way up to the Gryffindor Tower. She paused in front of a tapestry.

"Merida told me the passwordâ€¦but I don't think we should go in without her."

"Wait, she told you the password?" Jack demanded, "Why? She didn't have enough Gryffindor friends? I suppose she told you, too, Hiccup."

"No. I didn't even know the door had a password. All you have to do to get into the Hufflepuff basement is tap a barrel."

"That doesn't sound very secure."

"You'd be surprised. Our head of house said only Hufflepuffs have been in the room for at least three hundred years. Though it's hard to tell if that's because the room is actually more secure or if no

one wants to bother with us."

As Hiccup was speaking the tapestry flew open and Professor Bunnymund stepped out.

"Cricky, give a bit o' space around th' door," he stammered after nearly tripping on the three students, "Oi, you ain't Gryffindors. What are you lot doin' round here?"

"Um, well, we were looking for Merida," Hiccup said. "We were wondering if she was in there."

"I haven't seen her since she left for breakfast this morning. Doesn't mean she hasn't been here though, but she's not in there now. You'd best be running off. If I see Merida, I can tell her you're looking."

Hiccup thanked him before the teacher hurried off and the students were left alone.

"Let's try the Great Hall and see if we can catch a Gryffindor first year," Hiccup said. "If notâ€¦well I guess we search the school."

\* \* \*

><p>Merida had never been so still in all her life. Not even during the long and very boring gatherings of the lords with her mum hovering over her shoulder. Not even bound up in those silly corsets and stiff dresses, with her wild red hair bound under a wimple.<p>

Even that limited mobility would be a welcomed relief from this curse. She could not even open her mouth to call for help, and she was rather hungry. She hadn't eaten since dinner last night.

It all started as she was sulking down to breakfast that morning. Dreading the Potions lesson with Jack, she had been dragging her feet on the way downstairs, not even noticing as the other students got ahead of her by a whole floor.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw something blue. Her curiosity piqued, Merida turned down the corridor. The strange blue light reminded her of the wisps she had seen as a child. She kept trying to get closer, to confirm that it was a wisp and not a trick of the light but the light kept moving and, before she knew it, she was in a completely unfamiliar corridor. No new blue lights appeared and she couldn't remember which way she had come.

Merida turned looking for something familiar but before she had gone more than two feet a girl stepped out of the shadows. Merida recognized the girl as a Slytherin first year. Before she could say anything the girl cursed her with a jelly-legs jinx.

Merida fell to her knees. Before she understood what was going on, other Slytherin first years stepped out. Curses, jinxes, and hexes flew at her. Merida pulled out her wand, but it was no good. She couldn't deflect all their spells and didn't know the counter curses to the ones she'd been hit with.

"Expeliamus," a boy said. Merida's wand flew from her hand.

Before she could move, another student shouted, "Petrificus totalis!"

Instantly Merida's body froze, her limbs pinned to her sides. The Slytherins stopped casting spells as soon as she collapsed on the floor.

"Ha, I knew it would work," the first girl said.

"Do you think she can hear us?" a boy asked.

"Who cares. We should go thank him for teaching us these curses."

"What if somebody finds her?" a nervous sounding girl said. "What if it wears off?"

"It won't wear off. That's why he gave us the permanent sticking charm. I cast it just before. Come on, we can hide her in that secret passage behind the mirror on the fourth floor."

"\_Wingardium Leviosa\_" several of the students said. Merida would have scowled if she could move her mouth. They had only learned that spell the day before in Charms, now it was being used against her.

The students cut off the charm as they reached the passage. One of the students took out a wand and tapped the mirror before whispering, "\_Dissendium."\_"

The mirror opened and the students put her inside before shutting the mirror. Leaving her frozen and helpless in pitch black darkness.

That was how Merida spent the entire day. First came anger. Merida vowed revenge and plotted what she would do to the Slytherins the second she was released.

Second came fear. Merida began to doubt that anyone would find her, and what if they did find her, but couldn't do anything about it? The boy had said he cast a permanent sticking charm, what if that meant it couldn't be broken?

The last stage was a sort of odd acceptance. Merida, having been pinned like this for quite some time, began to wonder why the boys had attacked her. It was true she was no fan of Slytherin, but she hadn't done anything directly against them, aside from avoiding them, that is. In fact, the only Slytherin she had talked to was Jack Frost. Could he have put them up to this? She didn't really know him that well.

But the way those Slytherins were talking, someone had put them up to this, and even if Jack was not the mastermind, he probably knew about it. He might not have participated but he certainly didn't go out of his way to warn her, or defend her. Not that she would expect or want any help from that snake. He probably laughed when they suggested keeping her imprisoned like this. Bitterness crept back in. She might not ever get free, she could starve to death up here, but if she did, she vowed to come back and haunt the Slytherins, especially Jack.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: I'm so sorry about the terrible cliffhanger. I hate cliffies, but sometimes the story needs them.  
><strong>

\*\*On a side note, by now some of you may have noticed a few references to the How to Train Your Dragon book series. It's never anything important, I don't expect most people reading this to have read the books. However, as a heads up, I've been working on year two and, because I needed a few new characters, I added a few from the books. If you haven't read them, the characters could be read as OCs. Just thought I'd let you know.\*\*

## 12. Revenge

\*\*Revenge\*\*

Jack Frost was furious. They had found a Gryffindor first year who said Merida disappeared on the way to breakfast. That was when he started to share in Hiccup's worry. It was one thing to not show up for class, and with all the homework, who wouldn't need a break, but who would skip breakfast? Especially when they have so many friends to share with.

It was only when he heard the snickering of the other Slytherins that fury took him. Earlier that morning, before he could slip out to the kitchens, his roommates had attacked him. Jack managed to deflect the attacks using the spells Hiccup had taught him ... all but one.

The full body-bind spell had caught him unaware. His roommates had left him paralyzed on the bed. Even if he had known the counter curse, it wouldn't have done him any good being immobile.

Every time Jack started to get scared he reminded himself that Hiccup cared, that Hiccup would notice if he went missing. But how long would that take? Even if Hiccup was suspicious there wasn't much he could do. All the others had to say was that Jack was feeling ill and couldn't come to class.

Jack supposed Professor Black would notice him missing during Potions. He hoped it didn't come down to that, because he had a feeling he would be punished for being late no matter the reason.

Just as a small panic began to set in, the door to the room opened and Flynn Rider walked in. He took one look at Jack, then pulled his wand out with his left hand and said the counter curse.

"Thanks," Jack said as he tested his limbs. "Why are you here? Don't you have class?"

"It's still breakfast."

"So," Jack quickly straightened himself out, "aren't you ignoring me?"

"Only around the others." Flynn leaned up against the doorway, "I

noticed a lot of the Slytherins missing this morning. I was worried it had something to do with you. Seems I was right."

"Like you care."

"You're right; I don't." Flynn paused, "There was a boy, during my first year, Eugene Fitzherbert. He was like you; didn't know if he was pureblood or not. He was an orphan. The other students found out and it made his life miserable."

"What happened?" Jack asked in spite of himself.

"Eugene was only here that first year. He couldn't take it. Don't go mentioning this to anyone. It brings up too many painful memories." Flynn turned and left the room.

Jack stared after him before a clock chiming brought him out of his trance. Jack dashed down to the Potions room without breakfast.

The day had gone smoothly after that. The Slytherins stared at him when they found Jack leaning casually back in his chair as though nothing had happened between them at all. Professor Black even seemed in a pleasant mood, though he did give Jack the oddest look.

In short, everything was perfect until Hiccup had roped him into helping find Merida. He didn't want to care about her, he enjoyed the class without her, but when no Gryffindor knew where Merida was, and the Slytherins were laughing, Jack started to worry. When Hiccup and Rapunzel stated that all the Slytherin first years had missed breakfast, Jack got mad.

Jack marched over to Derek. Rapunzel and Hiccup followed behind. Derek stopped his snickering enough to look up into the icy brown eyes of Jack.

"What did you do to her?" Jack demanded coldly.

"I don't know who you mean." Derek started to turn away.

"Yes. You. Do." Jack resisted the urge to grab Derek by his shirt, most of the professors weren't paying attention but he wouldn't risk getting expelled.

"Why did you do it?" Jack prompted again. "Because she's a Gryffindor? Or maybe you just thought it would be a fun Halloween prank to attack muggleborns."

Hiccup gasped. Derek returned the chilly gaze, "Merida's more than just a mud-"

Derek froze as he realized he said too much. Jack never mentioned Merida's name. Jack pressed in, "Then why did you do it? Or better yet, what did you do?"

Derek refused to say any more. Jack stared him down. The air around the boys suddenly felt very chilly. Jack put his hands on the table hardly noticing as the warm food became cold before freezing completely. Derek shivered.

"Alright," Derek said, pulling his hands back as ice began to creep

over them, "she's on the fourth floor, behind the mirror."

Derek shot up and left the Great Hall. Jack turned and made off for the fourth floor with Hiccup and Rapunzel following.

"How did you do that?" Hiccup asked as they climbed the stairs.

"Do what?" Jack said not looking back.

"Making it cold like that. For minute I thought I was back on Berk."

"I made it cold?" Jack said without pausing.

"Yeah, couldn't you feel it?" Rapunzel asked.

"I figured it was just the winter coming, it is October 31st you know. Winter has always been my favorite season. I love the cold."

"I've never seen anything like that," Hiccup said. "It was like the ice came right out of your hands."

"It could be uncontrolled magic," Rapunzel offered. "Once schooling starts most wizards and witches have enough control, but wild magic can still manifest in times of extreme emotion."

"Hold on, I do not have extreme emotion for Merida!" Jack yelled as they stepped onto the fourth floor landing.

"Whether that's true or not, I don't think that was wild magic. I've seen a lot of wild magic on Berk, but it never looks like that. It almost always jumps to the desired effect. It just doesn't creep along the table like that, that was controlled."

"I was not trying to freeze him!" Jack snapped.

"Maybe not, but subconsciously I think you were casting that spell."

"What spell?"

"I don't know. I've never seen crawling ice like that, and the temperature drop. It wasn't like any freezing charm I've ever seen."

Jack stopped short, cutting Hiccup off, "This is it."

Jack pressed his wand up against the mirror, "\_Dissendium.\_"

The mirror flew open, revealing the very stiff form of Merida. The three students pulled her out into the hall. Hiccup held onto her arms as Rapunzel pulled out her wand.

"Um, guys?" Rapunzel said, "I have no clue how to undo this one. I'm not even sure what it is."

"It's a full body-bind. I'm not completely sure how to undo it either, though I have an idea. You need to-"

"\_Finite Incantatem," \_Jack said waving his wand. Merida was instantly released and stood up on shaky legs. She stretched out before turning on Jack.

"Finally given up ... on ... yer sick joke, have yeh?" she asked tiredly.

"What? You think I did this?" Jack demanded.

"Who else? It's obvious all th' Slytherins were in on it. Ye kent th' whole time an' ye left me. Tha's how ye knew how ta ge' thro' the mirror."

"What? Look, if you're going to chew me out, can you at least do it so I understand you?" Jack demanded.

"She said, 'It's obvious all the Slytherins were in on it. You knew the whole time and you left me, that's how you knew how to get through the mirror,'" Hiccup translated before turning on Merida. "You're wrong. Jack had nothing to do with this, we found out where you were from the Slytherin who did this."

"An' I suppose he told y' the password to get into the secret passage."

"No-"

"An' how t' undo the spell?"

"No-"

"An' â€"

"SHUT IT, RED!" Jack shouted, "Don't make me regret using that counter curse! I could have left you! It would have saved me a lot of trouble. I didn't have to help Hiccup look for you."

"THEN WHY DID YOU!" Merida shouted back. Jack glared at her but said nothing. The truth was he'd done it because he knew how it felt, having been under that very spell earlier that day. He knew how helpless it felt. And he hated that feeling. But he didn't feel like sharing that, especially not with Merida.

"I'll see you in class," Jack said with ice in his voice. He turned and left, leaving the others staring in shock.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup broke the silence, "Come on, we should go get a Professor. You can report the people who did this too you."<p>

"No," Merida said. "All a teacher can do is make them lose house points and give them detention. Besides, I don't know who the mastermind is. When they cursed me they mentioned someone had taught them the spells and set them on me."

"Really?" Rapunzel asked. "But who would be out to get you?"

"I don't know. The only one I can think of is Jack."



"Merida, stop," Hiccup commanded. "Jack helped us find you. He's not out to get you."

"Then how do you explain it? Him finding me?"

"Like I said. We asked the other Slytherins."

"And they listened? Like Jack was the commander. It was all for show I'll bet. Trying to keep himself out o' trouble."

"You don't know what you're talking about."

"I'll bet he's never been in trouble in his life. Anyway, you heard him, he knew the counter curse. You two didn't even know it. How do you think he learned it?"

Hiccup paused. He had no clue how Jack had learned it. The body-bind spell wasn't common on Berk. Spells like that couldn't penetrate a dragon's thick hide, so they were no use in combat, and it was a relatively tricky spell to master, so none of the kids had yet learned it. Even if the older Vikings did know it, they had never used it around Hiccup.

"It doesn't matter how he knew it," Hiccup defended. "You should be grateful he did, otherwise we would have had to get a professor to rescue you."

"If it weren't for him, I wouldn't have needed rescuing in the first place."

"You don't know that."

"Everyone who attacked me was a Slytherin first year, Hic. He knew about this, I'm sure. I'll bet he knew where I was right from the start."

Hiccup started to argue only to realize she was right. Jack knew exactly where the mirror on the fourth floor was, he made a beeline for it. He must have known there was a secret passage there. He even knew the spell to reveal the passage; Hiccup hadn't taught him that.

"Merida," Rapunzel said, "I don't think Jack is so bad."

"Of course not, he's nice to you," Merida said. Hiccup rolled his eyes. There was no arguing with Merida, who was convinced that all Slytherins were evil. The three students went down for lunch in the Great Hall. To his surprise, Hiccup noticed Jack was at the Slytherin table, glaring daggers at the boy he'd almost frozen.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack noticed Hiccup sit down with the Hufflepuffs before turning his gaze back to Derek. How many students had Derek and his gang attacked? Was it just Jack and Merida? Would more become victims? Was this a Halloween joke, or was something more sinister afoot?<p>

These questions raced through Jack's head as he glared at Derek. No one else would be attacked if Jack had any say in it. So much for

studying with Hiccup, this was far more important.

Derek got up. Jack followed suit. Derek didn't say anything as Jack followed him out of the Great Hall down to the Slytherin common room.

Jack sat in the furthest chair from Derek where he still had a clear view of the boy. Some of the students seemed surprised to see Jack in the cold Slytherin common room, but to his relief they all ignored him. At three o'clock all the first years got up to go down to flying lessons. Jack followed them at a distance, arriving at the Flying Lawn just after the Gryffindors.

Jack wandered over to Merida without taking his eyes off Derek. Merida scowled and turned her back to him. Jack didn't speak to her, letting her take the first turn on the broom they shared. When she landed halfway through the class to give the broom to Jack, he finally spoke.

"I don't think their prank was very funny," he said taking the broom.

"I still think you were involved. You can't tell me you didn't know," Merida said.

"I can tell you all I like, you don't have to believe me. But I think it might be better if you let this go. I had nothing to do with thisâ€¦in fact, I'd like to help you get back at them."

Merida gasped, "How did you know I was planning to get back at them."

"Please, after being locked in that passage half a day, anyone would want to get back at them."

"I don't trust you. You'll get me in trouble."

"No I won't. I promise."

"Why are you interested in helping me?" She asked suspiciously.

"Let's just say me and the other Slytherins are at odds. Besides, I don't think this was a very good prank. I say, let's show them how Halloween pranks should be done."

And teach them not to mess with muggleborns, he added silently. Merida glanced up at the other Slytherins.

"Deal." She and Jack shook hands before he mounted the broom and took to the sky. Now that basic lessons were over, Jack was free to fly as high as he wanted as long as he could keep the broom under control.

He had the feeling that the broom he made, which now lay in pieces in the Dark Forest, could have gone higher than the one Professor Grimm lent him and Merida, but even without his own broom, he still managed to fly higher than the rest of the class.

Jack did a few loop-de-loops, at one point he slipped off the end of

the broom, but before he could fall, he had flipped himself back onto it.

As class ended, he landed gracefully next to Merida. After the other students filed out, Jack and Merida began discussing their plans for revenge as they cleaned the brooms.

Even when they finished broom maintenance, they continued to discuss the plans. Jack felt it important to strike quickly, so if they were caught it would be dismissed as a Halloween prank.

The only thing the two really disagreed on was how much it should hurt the students. Merida wanted them to wish they'd been expelled, but Jack said that was no fun. He didn't really want to harm them. Merida ended up agreeing to this, only when he pointed out that if they kept it harmless they wouldn't get expelled even if they got caught.

Jack and Merida split up as they neared the Great Hall for the Halloween feast. For the second time that day Jack sat with the Slytherins, though not before stopping by the kitchens to let Hiccup know. Jack refused to meet his eye when Hiccup asked why he was suddenly so friendly with his house.

As the feast ended, most students hobbled off to bed, feeling quite full and sleepy. Not Jack. He had eaten quite a bit, but made sure to keep awake. He worked swiftly and silently as his roommates slept. It would be trickier to get the Slytherin girls, but Jack had no doubt he could do it. After all, there were only two of them.

\* \* \*

><p>Merida waited anxiously at the Gryffindor table. Breakfast was still quite a ways off but she didn't want to miss the Slytherins. Jack hadn't told her exactly what he was going to do, only that it would be hilarious. Merida had made a great many suggestions, including using that gammy spell to freeze the students, but Jack said it would be too predictable, and fairly easy to trace back, besides neither of them knew how to cast it.<p>

To her dismay, the other students all filed in looking perfectly fine. Merida was just starting to get mad at Jack for going back on their deal when he showed up. Jack grabbed a biscuit from the table before sending her a wink and leaving the Great Hall.

Merida examined the six Slytherin first years remaining. Maybe Jack did something so small they wouldn't notice? But no matter how long she stared she couldn't spot anything wrong with them.

She refrained from asking Hiccup or Rapunzel anything when she saw them during class. Both would lecture her on how she should have told a teacher instead of trying to exact revenge.

At every meal period she would stare at the Slytherins, but there was never any change. Merida scowled as she sank into bed that night, no doubt Jack had lied. The real trick was on her, for believing he would betray his friends. Well, she wouldn't make that mistake again.

The next day Merida stormed down to the Potions room in a foul mood.

Jack was lounging about acting as cheerful as ever. Merida gritted her teeth as she sat down, determined not to make eye contact.

"Hey, can we use your cauldron today?" Jack asked.

Merida nodded and got out her cauldron. As class started Professor Black introduced the potions they would be making today. The first step was to heat the cauldron.

Everyone huddled around their cauldrons, thankful for the fire in the icy cold dungeon. Everyone but Jack that is. Jack moved away from the cauldrons, as far back in his seat as he could.

Merida glared at him as she set to work getting out the ingredients for the potion. Every so often she would steal a glance at Jack. He halfheartedly chopped ingredients, but his eyes were focused on the other students, specifically the Slytherins. He would watch them, chuckle and then look away. About halfway through the class, just before they added the first ingredient to the cauldron, there was a loud pop from the front of the class. Everyone stopped what they were doing and looked around.

A cloud of smoke was rising from one of the Slytherin's cauldrons. Before anyone had a chance to react there was another pop, followed by a third pop. At each pop one of the cauldrons let out a huge cloud. Jack grabbed Merida's hand and pulled her back in the chair as the cloud of smoke enveloped the classroom.

Professor Black waved his wand and dissolved the smoke. Jack started to laugh. Merida looked over the Slytherins and let out a laugh too. Each one was orange, from head to toe. The black robes, hair, skin, all of it was orange. The same shade as the pumpkins on Halloween.

Soon the other Gryffindors joined in the laughter. A few of them had turned a bit orange as well, but not to the extent of the Slytherins, most of whom had been leaning over their cauldrons when the explosion happened.

Merida smiled. Jack had come through after all. Maybe he wasn't so bad.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Finally a break in the tension, I figured you needed it after last week's cliffhanger, but this story is far from over, after all they still have seven months at school.\*\*

\*\*Just a reminder that polls on my profile are still open if you care. \*\*

\*\*Dragons: Defenders of Berk is awesome! I hope I can include some of that in my story (won't be until their 3rd-5th year though, seeing as how the first movie hasn't even taken place yet in my story).\*\*

\*\*Also to KrazyCat, my favorite color is purple/purplish blue. Part of the reason I'm avoiding cliffhangers is because I'm following J.K. Rowling's pacing, in the first Harry Potter book, only four of the seventeen chapters end on cliffhangers.\*\*

### 13. Letters

#### **\*\*Letters\*\***

Jack squirmed under Professor Black's gaze. In retrospect, pulling a prank on Slytherin, in the head of Slytherin's class, had not been the brightest idea. But Potions was the only class he shared with Merida until Transfiguration on Monday, and that was too far away. He had to do it in a class with Merida, after all, it was mostly her revenge.

"Well?" Professor Black asked.

"Well, sir?" Jack responded in the most innocent voice he could muster, which unfortunately still sounded quite guilty.

"Why did you do it?" he asked quietly.

"What makes you think I did it?" Jack responded cheekily. He knew he was caught, but it was fun to make the teacher work for the confession.

"My dear boy, I know you did it," the teacher responded coolly. "What I want to know is why?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders. Pitch wasn't getting riled up, this was no fun. Time for the confession, "I don't know. It was fun?"

Pitch turned his back on Jack before speaking, "There is more to it."

"Nope."

"There was someone else? Someone who wanted to attack the Slytherins? A Gryffindor, perhaps?"

A bolt of fear spread through Jack. He couldn't possibly know Merida was involved, could he? But that was ridiculous, Merida wasn't involved. All she had done was tell him which student cast the spells on her. She came up with lots of ideas, that was true, but most of them involved cursing the other students or trying to get them expelled, neither of which Jack was willing to do. Besides, he promised she wouldn't get in trouble for this.

"No. It was all me," Jack said with a smirk.

"Liar." Pitch loomed over the boy, "You're afraidâ€¦afraid of getting someone else in trouble."

Pitch backed up and gave the boy a smile. The change from menacing to gentle happened so fast Jack almost missed it.

"Now Jackâ€¦ I can promise your friends won't be in trouble," Professor Black said with a sickly sweet voice. Jack remained silent. Professor Black's smile faltered.

"You do realize that if you don't tell me who else was involved, this punishment will be ten times worse."

Jack refused to answer.

Pitch's eyes narrowed, "Very wellâ€¦you have chosen your fate. Detention for the prank. Every night, immediately after dinner."

Jack relaxed. That wasn't so bad. He was expecting something like this. It was no worse than when he was grounded for setting the preacher's laundry on fire.

"And," Professor Black continued without looking at Jack, "since you seem to lack loyalty towards Slytherin, you will begin taking your meals in the Great Hall with the rest of your house."

"Yes, sir," Jack said in defeat. He would miss eating with Hiccup, but it wasn't the worst punishment.

"And," Pitch continued, eyes narrowing on Jack, "you are to spend your free time in the Slytherin common room."

"But-

"No buts, Jackson, unless you'd like to prove your loyalty to Slytherin by telling me who else was involved?"

Jack closed his mouth. So that was the game. Sell out his friends, not that he could really call Merida a friend, or be banned from spending time with them. Well, if there was one thing Jack was good at, it was games. This timeâ€¦he would play to win.

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><p>Hiccup picked at his food, half listening to the Hufflepuff's chatter around him. Every now and then he would glance over at the Slytherin table. Jack sat on the very corner of the table as far from the other students as he could get.<p>

Hiccup gave a sad smile. It had been a long time since they had a chance to really talk. Even though they still sat together in the shared classes, lessons were becoming challenging.

They were starting to learn spells in Defense Against the Dark Arts. Hiccup, who at first had been favored to pass the class due to his innate knowledge of defensive and offensive charms, was quickly becoming the laughing stock when he couldn't produce anything. It was especially humiliating with all the Slytherins there, laughing at him. They were almost worse than Snotlout. Almost.

Jack never laughed. When the Slytherin boy Jack called Derek insulted Hiccup before class one day, Jack was quick to defend him, reminding Derek it had taken over a week before they managed to scrub his pumpkin dye off, and promising to make it worse next time unless Derek kept his mouth to himself. After that the insults stopped, though they still snickered when Hiccup failed to produce the simplest of spells.

In History of Magic, the only other class Hufflepuff shared with Slytherin, Hiccup really did have the upper hand. Not only did he have the advantage of having grown up in a strong wizarding

community, but many of the wizards they discussed came from the Archipelago, such as Emeric the Evil, Egbert the Egregious, and Berk's very own Uric the Oddball and Bork the Bold.

Jack on the other hand really struggled with History of Magic. Hiccup offered to lend Jack his notes but they did no good. While Hiccup excelled at the written portions of lessons, Jack often found them tedious and was easily distracted. All the other classes had some practical element to them, but not History of Magic. It was pure memorization and writing assignments. The only exciting thing about it was Professor Toothiana. She had a very energetic way of talking that prevented most students from falling asleep. Her lessons had a way of sticking to the memory.

Hiccup stood up and left the Great Hall. Watching Jack was only reminding him how much homework he had. Slowly Hiccup made his way back to the Hufflepuff common room. On his way, he passed what used to be the door to the kitchen, now covered by a painting of fruit. Jack confessed he used pumpkins from the kitchen to make the dye he used; as a result the kitchen was now off limits to students.

Entering the common room, Hiccup felt a wave of warmth wash over him. Despite the comfort, Hiccup preferred the chilly corridors and dungeons. It reminded him of Berk.

How was Gobber managing the shop without him? Gobber had hired him early on to teach him a craft just in case he did turn out to be a squib. Stoick almost ordered Hiccup to quit when he got accepted to Hogwarts, but Hiccup managed to talk him out of it. It was nice to know if he couldn't do magic he'd have a place to go and a muggle skill.

Settling on the couch, Hiccup took a piece of parchment and a charcoal pen. He should be studying, he knew. His ability to pass the classes resided entirely on the written portion, but at the moment he felt lonely and homesick. Pushing his textbook aside, Hiccup began to pen a letter to his father.

\_Dear Dad, \_

\_I haven't heard from you since you left me at the trainâ€¦I hope you made it home safely. Before I left, Gobber said you were planning another expedition to find the dragon nestâ€¦I hope you get back to Berk before Snoggletog.\_

\_Students are allowed to go home for winter break, but I thought, you know, if you're not going to be home, maybe I'd just stay at school. It's nice here. The building is made of stone, maybe if we made our houses out of stone we wouldn't always be rebuilding.\_

Hiccup paused and reread his letter. He should probably tell his dad about classesâ€¦but that would either mean admitting he's just as much a squib here as he was on Berk, or lying. The letter was already longer than most Berkians would have the patience to read.

Stoick probably didn't care how Hiccup was doing in his classes anywayâ€¦No need to make him angry over the fact that Hiccup was rapidly failing Charms and Transfiguration. The only good news was that Hufflepuff was in the lead for house cup...not that Hiccup had

done much to help that, and there was still a chance that they would lose. Better not to get Stoick's hopes up only to disappoint him. Again.

With a sigh Hiccup finished the letter.

\_Say hi to Gobber and everyone for me. I love you, \_

\_Hiccup\_

Hiccup carefully folded the letter and set it aside. No hurry to mail it, it's not like Stoick would bother writing a response anyway. He could have told Stoick about the classes he was doing well in, but Herbology, History, Potions and Astronomy were all considered weak subjects on Berk, meant to be forgotten by all but the Healers and Mystics, like old Gothi the village elder. Certainly not subjects that the son of the chief and heir to the tribe should excel at.

Hiccup pulled out his book on Transfiguration, why couldn't this be his best subject? Then he could transfigure himself into someone bigger and stronger, and then Stoick would finally accept him.

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><p>Rapunzel lazily flipped through her astronomy book. It wasn't that she really needed to read it. Even if she hadn't read the whole book before coming to Hogwarts, many a night in her tower had been spent staring at the stars.<p>

Gently she put the book down, gazing at the Ravenclaw common room ceiling. Such a lovely shade of midnight blue—it looked just like the night sky.

With a squeal of excitement Rapunzel ran into the dorm room and threw open her trunk, digging through it until she found the set of paints. Mother Gothel had given them to her as a parting gift the night she left. Rapunzel had stayed up past midnight rearranging her trunk to make them fit.

Rushing back to the common room, Rapunzel climbed up the bookcase and began to paint. Using the astronomy book as a reference, and adding in what she remembered from the weekly class with Professor Lunanoff, Rapunzel began to chart the stars.

As she moved about painting the ceiling, she imagined she was painting her tower. It would look so nice with stars on the ceiling. Rapunzel made a mental note to add stars when she got home.

Getting to the higher points of the ceiling required a bit more work, but nothing she wasn't capable of with a few charms. \_Wingardium Leviosa\_ could be very handy in reaching the top.

When Rapunzel finished, she moved to put her paints back in her trunk and found a letter sitting on her bed.

Rapunzel glanced around nervously. No one had gone past her in the common room, and all of Rapunzel's roommates were in the library. Cautiously Rapunzel stepped up to the letter.



She gave a sigh of relief as she recognized the familiar script. Mother Gothel. An owl must have dropped it through the window.

Rapunzel sat down on her bed and opened the letter, briefly wondering why it hadn't come at breakfast like everybody else's letters and packages.

\_Dear Rapunzel, \_

\_I didn't think I would have to initiate this little conversation. Honestly Rapunzel, when I took you out of the tower, I expected you to keep up with me. I've taken care of you for all your life, the least you could do is write! I thought I raised you to have better manners.\_

\_It's been months and I have no idea how you're doing. The world is a scary place, pet. I've tried to warn you, but no, you had to go off to that school. I've been sitting here worried sick that someone has found out your secret. You have kept it secret, haven't you? Honestly Rapunzel, I won't be able to protect you if you do something stupid like that.\_

\_Just kidding, don't take it so seriously, pet. I expect you to tell me all about your school year when you come home for Christmas break. You had better be planning on coming home; I'm not getting any younger.\_

\_Don't forget, you're always welcome home if the world becomes too cruel for you. I haven't had a moment's rest since you left, knowing all the monsters roaming Hogwarts. If only you had stayed home, I could protect you. Living as far away as I do, the only way I can ensure your safety is if you follow my advice. Mother knows best.\_

\_And do remember not to mumble, Rapunzel, you're probably annoying all your teachers. I'm just teasing, of course.\_

\_Come home soon. I love you very much, \_

\_Mother Gothel\_

Rapunzel's brow furrowed. The school didn't seem that scary. Yes, the corridors could be creepy, especially at night, but overall Hogwarts felt cozy. And with all the other students and teachers Rapunzel hardly felt scared at all.

Rapunzel pulled out her quill and ink and started writing her response. Hopefully she could set Gothel's fears at ease.

\_Dear Mother, \_

\_ I'm sorry I haven't written. I've been practicing the spells we learn in class. I can't wait to come home and show them to you. I feel safe here. I was sorted into Ravenclaw. The Ravenclaw tower is large, circular and very airy, just like home, but without the kitchen.\_

\_I haven't seen any monsters at Hogwarts. None of the other students seem concerned either. In fact, the only monster I've even heard

about is a creepy horse in the Dark Forest, but as long as I stay close to the school I should be fine.\_

\_Of course I haven't told anyone about my hair. People give me strange looks when they see it, of course, but I don't think anyone has guessed its secret. Nobody even knows how long it really is. I have to re-braid it every week. It takes all day on Sunday, but I found this nice little private dressing room on the seventh floor. I can't wait to see you over Christmas break; my hair will look so much nicer if you do it.\_

\_Classes are ok, I'm learning a lot, I guess. It's nice to finally be able to practice with my wand. I have to say my favorite subject is Charms, we haven't learned too many yet, but the ones we have learned are really fun. I can't wait to show you.\_

\_I'll try to write more often, at least once a week.\_

\_I love you more,\_

\_Rapunzel\_

Rapunzel cast a drying charm on the letter before folding it and taking it up to the owlry. No sense in making Mother Gothel wait.

\* \* \*

><p>Merida glanced down at the letter from her mother, Queen Elinor. She had read it a dozen times since she got it last week, but had yet to respond.<p>

\_Dear Merida,\_

\_I know you are busy with school, but I really must stress that you do not neglect your royal duties. You are still the princess, and you will still be expected to act like one, witch or not. You must strive for perfection in every possible way.\_

\_I hope you've been practicing your diction. I will be checking your progress when you get home for Christmas. I had considered inviting the lords and their sons as well, but I decided against it. However, there will be at least one new member of the Dunbroch Clan, and the doctor thinks two is more likely, based on my size.\_

\_Now that you are to be a sister, it is more important than ever for you to set a good example and apply yourself with diligence to your studies. And remember, your first duty is to be a princess; your second, a sister; and your third, a witch. Keep these priorities straight and you will make a fine lady.\_

\_Your father, Maudie, and the court of Dunbroch send their regards and wish you well.\_

Merida leaned back into the chair in the Gryffindor common room. How was she supposed to respond to that? Her mum had always said she'd needed to be a better example for the kingdom, but now for a sibling? Now it wouldn't just be the feasts and holding court, but small family dinners and bedtimes as well. This was the first news she'd heard of the sibling, despite getting at least one letter from her mother or father every week.

Rolling her eyes Merida put the letter aside. She would also have to figure out how to convince her mother she'd been practicing her royal duties, without having to actually practice royal duties. Merida took up a quill and began to pen a response.

\_Dear Mum, \_

\_A sibling? I can't believe it. Classes are fineâ€|thanks for asking. Transfiguration is my favorite so far, the professor turned himself into a bunny once, I can't wait until the day I can transfigure people into animals.\_

\_But there's so much homework, I hardly have time to practice being a princess. I did make friends with another princess here. Her Mum and Dad don't make her practice being a princess, though.\_

\_I'll see you soon enough, \_

\_Love, Merida\_

Merida sealed the letter, wishing her mum was less controlling like Rapunzel's mum. She would send the letter off tomorrow morning at breakfast.

\* \* \*

><p>Jack gave a huge sigh as he looked out the window. The Slytherin common room had windows that looked out into the lake. Jack could see it was frozen solid. Earlier that day it had been snowing, he was sure it must be at least three inches deep by now. How Jack longed to run outside and pelt everyone he could see with snowballs. But instead he was confined to the chilly dungeon, just as cold, not as much fun.<p>

Pitch had repeatedly told him during his detention he would be allowed to leave again if he confessed who his partner for the prank was. Many times Jack wondered if Merida was worth it. Even though she seemed happy with his choice of revenge, she still gave him the cold shoulder in class. But no matter how she treated him, he would never go back on his promise.

Many nights he spent in detention wondering why Merida hadn't just asked the school to expel the other students. Or at least put them in detention, as she had apparently asked Professor Black to do with him after they met. Pitch said on the very first night of school that Merida's word was law at Hogwarts, so why have an amateur revenge schemeâ€|unless Pitch Black was lying?

Jack lazily flipped through his textbooks. He'd read through them millions of times (really it was the only thing he could do), yet the words never seemed to stick. Jack was far better at the practical application.

Whenever the rest of the house, or at least those in his dorm room, were gone, Jack would take out his wand and practice the spells. Playing with magic was way more fun than reading a book. But, unfortunately, the times when he had the common room to himself were few and far between. Today was worse than usual. Because of the snow, the common room was filled to the brim with students trying to warm

up.

Jack didn't really mind the crowd. Despite not really getting along with them, he was glad of the company; well, until Derek came in and started a loud discussion of why muggles were inferior.

Closing his book, Jack wandered back to his dorm room. Two other students were there, playing a game of wizard's chess. They ignored him as he hopped onto his bed. Ever since Jack dyed them (which still hadn't come all the way out of their clothing) his roommates had given him the cold shoulder. Derek had started it, refusing to acknowledge Jack except for frequent insults to muggles and mudbloods. He usually spoke as if Jack wasn't there at all.

A few weeks ago, Jack wouldn't have minded, might have even been grateful that they weren't cursing him or messing with his stuff, but now that the Slytherins were his only company, the isolation was unbearable.

Jack looked down at his book. He couldn't bear to read it again. As he put the book back in his trunk, his hand brushed the stack of paper. Most of the paper was for notes and writing essays as homework. Mother had made him promise he wouldn't waste the paper, but surely a letter home wouldn't be wasting it?

\_Dear Mom and Emma, \_

\_How is everyone doing in Burgess? When I come home for Christmas break remind me to thank the parson for teaching me how to read and write instead of receiving the birching his wife wanted to give me for climbing the rafters - and breaking them - during mass. I would have failed this school if I couldn't read and write. There's so much note taking.\_

\_I'm not the best in class, except for flying, but I'm pretty good at spells. One of my friends taught me some hexes and counter curses for self defense. I can't wait to show you.\_

\_Maybe next summer my friend can come visit. I haven't seen him perform any spells yet, but he must be really good. He's definitely a good teacher. \_

\_I can't wait to see you next month. They say after the train drops me off in London, there will be a carriage that will take me closer to home. I'm not sure exactly where yet. The school will send you a letter announcing the city I'll be dropped off at.\_

\_I think the owl I send this with will wait for a bit, so you can write back if you want. See you both soon.\_

\_Love, Jack\_

\_P.S. Emma should know there are lots of girls here.\_

Jack set the parchment on his bedside table to dry. Just as he pulled out a different spell book to read, Derek strolled in, continuing his conversation on blood purity. Jack jumped up and went back to the common room. He'd sneak back into the bedroom after Derek was asleep.

## 14. Christmas

**\*\*A/N:** Just another disclaimer, the song lyrics in this chapter belong to Disney, not me.\*\*

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><p><strong>Christmas<strong>

Hiccup shared a compartment on the train with Rapunzel and Merida when they left Hogwarts for winter break. As soon as the train dropped them off in London, Rapunzel joined Mother Gothel for the trip home, while Merida raced off to find the royal carriage waiting for her. Hiccup spotted Jack getting into a carriage, but before he could say anything thick arms enveloped him.

"Welcome back!" Gobber's loud voice rang in his ears.

"Gobber? Where's dad?"

"Your father had to stay on Berk so he sent me to bring you home." Gobber hugged Hiccup again, "Now why don't you come and help me row the long boat you can tell me all about what you've learned."

Hiccup nodded and they set out together. Several hours, and many awkward silences, later they arrived in Berk. Stoick stood on the dock, ready to greet Hiccup.

"Welcome home, son," he said lifting Hiccup and twirling him around.

"Great to be home, Dad," Hiccup said as Stoick lowered him down.

"How is Hogwarts?"

"Oh, it's great. Couldn't be better!"

"What's your favorite spell?" Stoick asked leading the boy back towards the village. Hiccup hesitated. Whatever he said, Stoick was sure to ask for a demonstration, and Hiccup wouldn't be able to give one. Luckily, Hiccup was saved from having to answer by the appearance of Astrid, Fishlegs, Snotlout, and the twins, Ruffnut and Tuffnut.

"Hi," Fishlegs said. "So what's England like?"

"Who cares? Did you get to blow anything up?" Tuffnut asked.

"Did you get expelled yet?" Ruffnut added.

"What? No!" Hiccup defended.

"Stoick!" a grizzly voice said from the top of the hill. Hiccup turned to see Mildew.

"Mildew what is it this time?" Stoick asked tiredly. "I'm sorry, son. I'll have to hear about school later. Why don't you and your

friends catch up in the Great Hall? Coming, Mildew."

"I'm so glad they don't let losers like you into a cool school like Durmstrang," Snotlout sneered.

"So, Hiccup," Astrid said, punching him on the shoulder, "what is Hogwarts like?"

"Wellâ€¦it's different. I'm pretty sure I was the only Viking there."

"No way," Tuffnut said. "What kind of wizards aren't Vikings?"

"What kind of people aren't Vikings?" Ruffnut added.

"Hiccup, don't listen to them," Astrid said rolling her eyes. "Durmstrang has plenty of non-Viking wizards, like Professor North. He teaches combat."

"I can't understand him under that Russian accent," Snotlout said, "but it sure is fun to fight with the sabers."

"Wait, you have weapons practice at Durmstrang?" Hiccup asked.

"Duh," Ruffnut said. "It wouldn't be fun otherwise."

"Don't you have weapons training?" Fishlegs asked.

"No, we have Defense Against the Dark Arts and that's it for combat."

"Defense \_Against\_ the Dark Arts?" Tuffnut repeated. "Why teach that when they could just teach Dark Arts?"

"Oh, I read about that in History," Fishlegs said. "The founders of Hogwarts didn't approve of Dark Artsâ€¦or something like that. Around every century someone tries to bring the class back, but it doesn't usually stick. Unlike the Founders of Durmstrang, who embraced the Dark Arts."

"You mean you actually paid attention in History?" Ruffnut said, rolling her eyes. The conversation carried on with the students of Durmstrang bickering amongst themselves, ignoring Hiccup. He was secretly very glad to be ignored - as long as they didn't pay attention, they wouldn't notice that he was still a squib.

Hiccup ducked out of the conversation when Ruffnut and Tuffnut started to argue about the chances of getting expelled for blowing up the school. Tuffnut thought the school would look better in flames, but Ruffnut reminded him that Dagur got expelled for setting just one tower on fire. 'No, got expelled when he threw a flaming knife at a teacher,' Astrid corrected.

Slowly Hiccup walked up to his own house. The walls and roof seemed almost new, and considering the dragon attacks, they probably were. Hiccup entered the house and climbed the stairs to his room. Everything was just the way he left it.

Hiccup smiled as he flipped through a few sketches he had made before

leaving. The one thing he missed most at Hogwarts was the access to a forge. Hiccup took the sketch and walked down to the blacksmith shop. Nothing could make him feel more at home than making a new invention.

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><p>The second Rapunzel stepped off the train; she was pulled into a tight hug by a very old Mother Gothel. Gothel quickly pulled the girl out of the crowd without giving her a chance to say goodbye.<p>

As soon as they were alone, Gothel looked Rapunzel over, "Are you alright? I've been worried sick."

"I'm fine, mother."

"Good, now let's hurry, pet. Mumsy is feeling a little rundown." Mother Gothel took Rapunzel to a nearby fireplace and the pair traveled back to the tower via floo powder.

"So, Mother ..." Rapunzel started.

"Not right now, Rapunzel, Mummy needs to brush your hair first"

"Oh, right."

Rapunzel raced to set up the chairs. Mother Gothel started to undo the braid as Rapunzel sang,

"Flower, Gleam and Glow" Rapunzel's hair glowed as she sang, filling the room with light.

"Let you're magic shine,

Make the clock reverse

Bring back what once was mine

Heal what has been hurt

Change the fates' design

Save what has been lost

Bring back what once was mine

What once was mine."

A young mother Gothel breathed in a sigh of relief as she continued to unbraid Rapunzel's hair.

"Much better, Rapunzel. Before you go back to school I'll need you to brew me some more of that rejuvenation potion."

"Yes, Mother. So, about school -"

"Rapunzel, you know, it's been so long since I saw you, is it just me or are you getting a bit chubby?" Rapunzel's face fell. "I'm just kidding, I love you, you're adorable."

Rapunzel chuckled nervously, "Uhâ€¦so, Mother, as I was saying, I'm getting good at casting spells and I was wondering ifâ€¦um, maybeâ€¦"

"Rapunzel, you're mumbling, it's highly annoying."

"Right, sorry, I was wondering if, this year, maybe I could spend Christmas with my real parents?"

Mother Gothel stood up, "You want to visit the kingdom?"

"Or they could visit hereâ€¦maybe? I've gotten stronger, Mother, I really have. I'm at the top of most of my classes."

"Don't be naïve, Rapunzel. They might have taught you a few spells, but you're still far too fragile to appear in public."

"But I was ok at the school."

"Of course you were, dear. Surrounded by teachers and experienced wizards, but you wouldn't stand a chance out in the real world. The world is full of wicked, dangerous people. The staff at the school is being paid to keep you safe, but outside those walls you're vulnerable."

"But the palace guards -"

"Are mostly muggles and won't be able to protect you."

"Then why can't my parents come here?" Rapunzel pined. Gothel laughed.

"Why would they want to come here? They're embarrassed by you and your uncontrolled magic."

"But I can control it now!"

"Please, don't be ridiculous, Rapunzel. You think learning a few spells qualifies you as being strong and controlled? I suppose you know all the spells required to defend yourself against the plague, snakes, and rhinos?"

"No, but -"

"And you can save yourself from poison ivy, muggings and dragons?"

"No, but -"

"Stop. You're upsetting me. Everything I do I do for you, you know. But if you insist upon leaving to go visit your parents who don't even acknowledge you to the publicâ€¦I only took care of you and protected you."

Rapunzel's brow creased, "No, I won't leave you, Mother."

Gothel smiled, "Good. Now why don't you go unpack, I'm making hazelnut soup."

"Yes, Mother." With a sigh Rapunzel obeyed.



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><p>Jack was out of the carriage the second it stopped. He'd have to figure out how to get his house permanently connected to the floo network so he'd never have to do that again.<p>

Not that it wasn't fun to see the snow covered countryside, but Jack absolutely hated sitting still for so long. None of the other students going home in the carriage would talk to him. Just like Merida, they assumed that since he was from Slytherin he must be evil.

But Jack wouldn't have to think of house prejudice or blood purity for the rest of his vacation. Giving a jump of jubilation, Jack rolled around in the snow.

"Jack!" He heard his sisters' voice. Quickly he sprang up and ran towards the sound. His mother and sister were there, a snowy white horse at their side. Jack bounded over.

"Welcome home, Jack," his mother said, squeezing his shoulder. "You're covered in snow."

"I missed you," Emma added as his mother started brushing snow off his head.

"Yeah, me too. Where'd the horse come from?" Jack lifted his sister onto the horse.

"The Parson," his mother said, "I had to have him help me read your letters and when he saw you were coming into a town so far away, he lent me his horse. You have a lot to thank him for."

"Don't I know it." Jack started walking alongside the horse, feeling far too keyed up to ride it. "Hey, so he's ok with me being a wizard? He isn't gonna, I don't know, try to drive the devil out or anything?"

"Goodness no! Where would you get an idea like that?"

"Must have been a nightmare, then. I get them a lot at school. I've had a few where there were witch huntsâ€¦I guess sometimes they seem real."

"The school is giving you nightmares? I don't like the sound of that."

"It's nothing, Mom. It's not like the boogeyman is there or anything."

Jack let the conversation fall. He knew why he was having nightmares, but it would scare his family, maybe even make his mom pull him out of school. He started getting the nightmares right along with his detentions. Professor Black would spend the first hour interrogating him about Merida, which Jack always refused to answer, followed by being told to drink a potion or be expelled. Jack would drink it and then fall into a nightmare-laden sleep.

After an hour of walking, the village of Burgess came into view.

Jack's mother helped his sister off the horse.

"Why don't you children head on home. I must return the horse."

"M'kay, Mom. What do you say, Emma? Want to race?"

Emma nodded and the two took off. Jack took the lead. He heard Emma panting and laughing behind him. Jack slowed down just a bit to make sure he didn't lose his sister. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed the lake near their house. It looked solid. He'd have to remember to take his sister skating before vacation was over. Yeah, a fun day of ice-skating was just what he needed to forget the nightmares.

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><p>Merida spent the carriage ride back to Scotland trying to think up excuses as to why she hadn't been practicing her royal duties. As it turned out, she needn't have worried.<p>

Though her father did come to greet her, he and the rest of the court were distracted by the fact that Queen Elinor was in labor. Merida managed to ride Angus, practice her archery and sword fighting, steal a plate of desserts and ride Angus again without anyone noticing.

As Merida finished brushing down Angus, a shout rang through Castle Dunbroch. Merida set aside her brushes and hopped the fence, running back to the castle in time to hear them announce the birth of Prince Harris.

Merida stopped. A brother. A younger brother. This was perfect. She wouldn't have to worry about being a princess anymore, her brother could take over. Merida skipped up to her room. She could pursue witchcraft, maybe mum would even let her out of her promise to study over summer.

Merida's hand was on the door to her room when another call announced the birth of Prince Hubert. Well, mum did say twins were likely. Merida briefly wondered if this would have an impact on succession before dismissing it. Mum and dad could figure that out; it wasn't her responsibility.

"Announcing the birth of Prince Hamish!" Merida heard the guard call. Three. She had three siblings? Brothers. Perfect. There was no chance she'd inherit the Kingdom of Dunbroch now. No more rules, no more responsibility. Mum would still want her to be an example, but at school she'd be free.

As it turned out, that was Merida's best Christmas ever. Her mother was so tired from the births, she didn't check on Merida's progress at all—Merida was free.

\* \* \*

><p>Flynn Rider smiled when he woke up one cold December day, the first full day of break. He rolled over, eyes peeping out from under the covers. Sure enough, the other seven beds in the fifth year dorm room were empty. The room was so quite.<p>

He took his time getting up and getting dressed. It was not often he had a room all to himself. Even over the summer he had to share with the other orphans. But come Christmas break at Hogwarts and Flynn was alone at last.

The common room was eerily empty. He saw a few other students at breakfast, but none of them were from Slytherin. It was rare for a Slytherin student to stay behind. Professor Black didn't like Christmas much; anyone who wished to celebrate the season had to leave.

Flynn never found a stack of presents at the base of his bed, though whether this was because he was considered naughty or there was truth to the rumor that Santa avoided the Slytherin Dungeon was up for debate.

Flynn enjoyed the comforts of having the entire dungeon to himself, claiming the coziest chair by the fire, enjoying the peace of sleeping in and the joys of staying up late without having to worry about how much noise he was making, and having a bit of fun jumping on his roommate's beds.

One afternoon, as Flynn lightly dozed by the fireplace, a looming shadow stepped out from behind him. Flynn jumped as the grey hand touched his wrist and he found himself staring into the golden eyes of Pitch Black.

"Enjoying your time alone, are you?" Black started.

"Yes, thanks," Flynn said as he stood up. "Is there something you want?"

"Flynnâ€¦I have a proposition for you." Pitch Black loomed over Flynn, standing between Flynn and the fire, casting Flynn into shadows.

"Oh yeah? What kind of proposition?"

"One of the younger students is being troublesome. I have received word that he is plotting something with one of the other houses. If I did not believe others were involved, I would go after the boy myself, but as it is, I require knowledge of who his associates are so I can validate whether or not they pose a threat."

"And so you need me to find out?" Flynn asked insincerely. "I'm touched, professor. What makes you think I want to help?"

"You'll helpâ€¦because this is for the safety of your house and the school and if the school is harmed, good luck finding a muggle job when you have no muggle skills."

Flynn heaved a sigh, "What exactly do you want me to do?"

"Befriend the student. Find out who he hangs out with for me, and act as messenger. You will report to me what Jackson Frost -"

"Wait, Jack Frost? No, no, no, no, no. That kid reminds me too much of myself. I won't do it."

Pitch growled and grabbed Flynn by his neck, pushing him into a

corner of the room. Fear flashed before Flynn's eyes.

"You'll do thisâ€¦or I'll undo the memory charms I put on the rest of the faculty and student body. I helped you onceâ€¦you owe me. And unless you want everyone to go back to taunting the poor mudblood orphan Eugene, you'll do exactly as I say."

Pitch let go of Flynn's neck, causing the boy to collapse to his knees.

"You don't know that I'm mugglebornâ€¦" Flynn choked out.

"So? If I undo the memory charms, everyone will believe you're a mudblood. And if enough people believe it, it might as well be true. You will start your service to me by befriending Jack. He performed some advanced hexes; I am particularly curious to find out who taught him these. Do not let Jack know of our arrangement. It might frighten the boy, and the last thing I want to do is frighten children. Enjoy the rest of break."

Pitch Black dissolved into the shadows, leaving Flynn alone once again.

## 15. Leap Day

**\*\*Leap Day\*\***

Jack arrived along with the rest of the school the day before classes resumed. Jack ignored his classmates as they discussed what presents they got for Christmas. All Jack got was coal. He didn't really mind, though, winter in the Burgess could be very cold and a lump of coal that saved him from having to go out and chop more firewood was a welcome gift.

Jack trailed behind his housemates as they descended the stairs leading to the dungeons. Most of the house stopped in the common room to continue their conversations. Jack decided to reacquaint himself with his bed, maybe try to catch one last good dream before the nightmares returned, but before he could make it to his room a shadow jumped out at him. Pitch stepped forward as the boy stumbled back.

"Welcome back, Jack," he said with a menacing smile. "Did you have a nice break?"

"Perfect. It didn't involve you," Jack replied, too high on his recent vacation to care if Pitch punished him for being cheeky.

"Now, Jack, I'm hurt. And here I was ready to let you off the hook."

"Well I - wait, really?"

"Of courseâ€¦I feel you have learned your lesson. So long as you refrain from humiliating the rest of your house again, I see no reason to keep you confined, though I do insist that you continue to take your meals in the Great Hall where I can keep my eye on you."

"Uh, sure. Thanks." Jack turned and started to leave the common room, headed for the door to the rest of the castle.

"Jackson?"

The boy stopped and turned back to face Professor Black.

"Not right yet. You should unpack first. You can leave the Slytherin Dungeon tomorrow."

"Oh, okay." Jack smiled as he went back to his dorm room. He didn't really have anything to unpack, he hadn't brought anything home with him and he had no gifts from his family.

No sooner had Jack propped himself up on his bed than the door opened. Expecting it to be Derek, Jack rolled over and pretended to sleep.

"Hey, you awake?"

Jack's eyes flashed open. That wasn't Derek's voice. Turning slowly, Jack realized it was Flynn.

"What do you want?"

"Can't a fellow classmate say hello?"

"You never bothered to before, in fact I specifically remember you ignoring me."

"Right, sorry about that."

"What do you want, Flynn?"

"I saw you come in here alone; I just thought maybe you'd like some company. I know I could use someone to chat with."

"Then go out in the common room. There's a ton of people."

"They don't like me."

"Well, after you ditched me, I don't like you either."

"Fair enough," Flynn said, but made no move to leave, "but I can handle one person who doesn't like me a lot better than a whole crowd."

Jack rolled over. If Flynn wouldn't leave, Jack would just ignore him. Unfortunately, Jack was not very good at ignoring people. Even being angry at Flynn couldn't quench the bubble of excitement he felt that someone was paying attention to him. All Flynn had to do was start whistling before Jack flipped back over to face him.

"So what did you want to talk about?" Jack asked after a long silence.

"Just stuff you could start by telling me about your vacation."

"You don't want to talk about your vacation first?"

"Nothing to tell. I stayed here."

"Why?"

"The dungeon is just so cozy, I couldn't stay away," Flynn said giving a smirk. "Not all of us are lucky enough to have a family to go home to, you know."

"Oh. Sorry."

"Enough about me, what happened over your vacation?"

"I taught my sister how to ice skate, built 17 snowmen and won 8 different snowball fights, including one against the preacher, and Mother invited the whole village over to celebrate my birthday."

Jack and Flynn soon became enveloped in a conversation about what the best wintertime activity was.

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel reluctantly returned to school just before break was over. Mother Gothel spent most of the holidays reminding Rapunzel just how terrifying the outside world was, and just how ill suited to face it Rapunzel was.<p>

Part of Rapunzel wanted to stay in her tower, where Mother Gothel would protect her forever, but she knew if she stayed locked up forever she'd never learn how to control her magic enough to visit her parents. And so Rapunzel left the tower in the glen for the Ravenclaw tower.

Classes resumed and while Rapunzel never forgot Mother Gothel's warnings, her focus shifted to doing homework and studying. Some nights she studied alone, but most of the time Rapunzel sought out other students. She would have enough nights alone when she returned to her home tower.

The other students in Ravenclaw were always up for studying, but Rapunzel found those from her year preferred quiet study. She could be quiet but found she remembered more when speaking out loud or singing about her lesson.

Often Rapunzel studied with Merida. Merida wasn't particularly keen to study, but enjoyed spending time with Rapunzel, especially after her mother Queen Elinor approved the relationship on the grounds that Merida would learn more about being a princess from Rapunzel than she would by practicing alone.

On days when Merida felt like spending time with her more athletically inclined friends, Rapunzel was always drawn to Hiccup. He never seemed to stop studying - if he wasn't in the Hufflepuff basement, he could usually be found in the library.

One day, as Rapunzel and Hiccup studied together in a quite corner of the castle, they chanced to see Jack Frost walking around throwing

snowballs at people. Rapunzel thought nothing of it and continued to read, but Hiccup suddenly became distant and distracted.

"What's wrong?" Rapunzel asked setting down her book.

"Did you just see Jack?"

"Yes? What's so strange about that? He is a student here."

"Heâ€¦It'sâ€¦He isn't supposed to be out here, is he? He can't have classes, it's Saturday."

"So?"

"So Jack told me he was grounded. What's he doing wandering around the castle? I was under the impression that he couldn't leave Professor Black's sight."

"Didn't you know? He mentioned it weeks ago to meâ€¦He's been free since Christmas."

"Why didn't he tell meâ€¦I thought we were friends," Hiccup said sadly. Rapunzel reached out to pat Hiccup on the shoulder.

"I'm sure he's just busy. He probably didn't want to keep you from studying."

"I guessâ€¦Or he finally noticed I'm a squib."

"I'm sure that's not it. Why don't you go talk to him, ask him right now?"

"Iâ€¦no." Hiccup took a long pause, "He didn't bother to tell meâ€¦so he must not want to hang out anymore. Let's get back to studying."

Rapunzel let the subject drop and picked up her book. Hiccup remained distant and melancholy throughout the rest of the study session.

The next time Rapunzel saw Jack during Charms she confronted him.

"Hi, Rapun," he said casually.

"Don't 'hi' me. Why aren't you being a good friend to Hiccup?"

"What?" Jack nearly toppled over in his chair, "What makes you think I'm being a bad friend?"

"We saw you, and Hiccup had no clue you weren't in detention anymore."

Jack flinched, "Oopsâ€¦I guess I did forget to mention that."

"Now he thinks you don't want to be friends anymore."

"That's not true! It's because I want to be friends that I wasn't spending more time with him!"

"What do you mean?" Rapunzel asked, her anger becoming curiosity. Jack heaved a sigh before replying softly.

"Look, I didn't want to put him in danger, that's all."

"And how would you put him in danger?"

"The other kids in my class don't exactly like me. I didn't mind at first, but when an older boy in my house mentioned that he'd been avoiding me because he didn't want to become a target, I started to worry about Hiccup."

"He thinks you hate him because he's not good at magic."

"I did notice he has trouble casting spellsâ€|that's part of the reason I've been avoiding him in particular. If they picked on you or Flynn, or anyone else, you'd all be able to cast spells to defend yourselves; Hiccup wouldn't."

"He's not that weak, you know."

"I know, but neither is Merida and you saw what they did to her on Halloween. Even if Hiccup is perfectly capable of protecting himself, the fact that he has yet to cast a single spell might make him more of a target. I just don't want to see him get hurt."

"I think he feels hurt now."

Jack bowed his head, "I didn't think he would care."

"Of course he cares, you're his best friend. He misses you." Rapunzel had to stop talking as the lesson commenced. Jack hardly seemed to be paying attention to class at all. When the professor dismissed them, Jack pulled Rapunzel aside.

"You're right. If it was meâ€|I know I'd want the friend whatever the dangers. Now all I have to do is make up with him. If only I knew howâ€|"

Rapunzel bit her lip as they both pondered the situation. Suddenly Rapunzel's face broke out into a huge grin, "I know just the thing!"

\* \* \*

><p>Several weeks later, on the 29th of February, Hiccup found himself in an extremely tiresome conversation with Merida. He really wasn't sure how he got into a discussion about which method was better: archery or axe throwing.<p>

He vaguely remembered Merida seeking him out, saying she needed help making arrows. Arrows weren't Hiccup's particular specialty, but you don't spend a good chunk of your life working in the armory without learning a bit about them. Merida had started by showing Hiccup an arrow she brought from home, and somehow that conversation turned into this one.

"â€|and you can make your own arrows," Merida argued.



"Only if you know how to do the fletching properly, and I can make my own axes. I work at a forge."

Merida looked like she wanted to argue some more, but for some reason she didn't.

"Well, we'll have to continue this debate a bit later. I promised Rapunzel I'd show her my arrow," Merida said hopping up from her chair. "Don't want to risk bringing it out too often, they might confiscate it."

"Alright. See you later Merida," Hiccup started to leave but Merida grabbed his hand.

"Why don't you come with me? I'm sure Rapunzel wouldn't mind."

"No, I really should get goingâ€¦I have studying to do and all."

"Oh, please come with me, Hiccup. You could tell Rapunzel all about the other weapons you've made." Merida gave him big puppy dog eyes.

"What's this really about?" he asked, starting to get suspicious.

"Rapunzel'll kill me if I tell you," Merida said, "and if you don't come, then it's all for naught."

Hiccup swallowed hard and followed Merida. He was starting to figure out what this was really aboutâ€¦but the girls didn't knowâ€¦did they? Merida led him up through the castle to the small empty classroom. Hiccup paused. Neither she nor Rapunzel knew he used to practice magic here with Jack. Hesitantly, Hiccup opened the door and walked in.

"Happy Birthday!" Rapunzel, Merida, and Jack shouted when Hiccup entered the room. Hiccup's jaw dropped. He didn't think anyone would remember his birthday. He almost forgot himself amid the chaos of classes.

"I'm sorry," Jack started, "that I wasn't a better friend. I hope thisâ€¦and a promise to do betterâ€¦will make up for it. So what do you think?"

Hiccup took his eyes off Jack and looked around the room. The walls and desks were covered in a tarp, a tarp that was painted with images of Vikings. It almost looked like home. The Vikings wore horned helmets, and dragons that looked vaguely like a cross between Gronckles and Nadders stood side by side, while delicate snowflakes fell all around them.

"Rapunzel painted that," Jack said, "but I helped. She did most of it, but I painted the snow."

"Is that supposed to be Berk?" Hiccup asked.

"Yes," Rapunzel said. "I remembered what you said about being homesick before, so I thought maybe this would help. I've been sending owls to your friend Fishlegs, trying to figure out what Berk

looked like. I hope it's close."

"It's perfect, Rapunzel. Thank you." Hiccup gave the blonde girl a hug. As he stepped away he noticed a table set up in the corner piled with sweet foods such as cupcakes and keets.

"Where did you get these?" Hiccup asked taking a keet.

"Jack got them from the kitchen" Rapunzel said.

"How did you get into the kitchen? The entrance is sealed with a painting," Hiccup asked.

"It took me nearly three days to figure out how to get around that. You have to make the pear laugh. And I didn't get everything. Merida got the cupcakes from Attlia's bake shop in Hogsmeade."

"Wow, you and Merida, working together without fighting?"

"Oh, there was fighting," Merida said. "I didn't think Jack would be able to get into the kitchens, but th' Slytherin insisted he could. I ordered the cupcakes as a contingency."

"There are other Slytherins you know," Jack said, a hint of irritation in his voice, "and I told you we wouldn't need any other food. I knew I could figure out how to get into the kitchens."

"Tha' no reason -"

"Guys, you promised," Rapunzel reprimanded. "No arguing during the party."

"Right. Sorry, Hiccup," Jack said.

"Sorry," Merida mumbled.

"It's ok. Kind of reminds me of home. Ruffnut and Tuffnut are always fighting. Guess it's a sibling thing."

"Oh please! I would not fight with my sister like this!" Jack said.

"I can't even imagine my brothers being so annoying!" Merida argued.

"Wait, you have brothers?" Jack asked, staring at Merida.

The group soon became engaged in a conversation on siblings, and it wasn't long before they were all munching on the snacks and chatting merrily about nothing in particular. Of all of Hiccup's birthdays, this was by far the best.

\* \* \*

><p>Flynn waited alone in the Slytherin Common Room. Jack came back to the Dungeons late that night. The two were alone. Jack bounced over to Flynn.<p>

"So, how'd it go?" Flynn asked casually.

"Great!" Jack hopped into the seat next to Flynn. "I would have invited you, but you don't really know Hiccup; and Merida was there, apparently she has a one Slytherin limit. Rapunzel managed to keep her from ruining it. I don't know how a sweet girl like Rapunzel became friends with someone so obnoxious."

"So how'd the birthday boy like it?"

"He loved it. I think he's finally forgiven me. I'm glad to have my friend back. He's the one who taught me some basic hexes early on, you know," Jack said.

Flynn shot up and started to pace.

"Something wrong?" Jack asked with concern.

"Yes - I mean, no," Flynn turned away from Jack, "it's fine, why don't you go to bed, it's past curfew."

As soon as Jack was gone, Pitch Black stepped out of the shadows. Flynn hardly flinched as the shadows surrounded him.

"You did not have to end the conversation there, Flynn," Pitch said cupping the boy's chin in his hand.

"So you heard."

"Yes, yes. Well done, Flynn. I was starting to suspect you were deliberately trying to prevent the boy from telling you about his friends, but you came through in the end."

"Why do you care about who he's friends with anyway? So what if he learned a bit of magic outside of class, a lot of students learn from outside the school as well as inside."

"There are a multitude of reasons, and I am not obligated to share any of them with you. However, I will say this: that boy is a hazard to the school. Keeping tabs on him is the only way to ensure everyone's safety."

"So what do you need me for?"

"Jack does not trust me. He trusts you. And soon his friends will, too."

"No. I helped you already. I won't do it again."

"Oh, but you will Flynn, you will. Remember how miserable you were in your first year? I can make that happen again. And worse? not only would you be returning to the nightmare, but Jack would feel so betrayed that you never told him, he would shun you."

"No, he wouldn't - he knows what it's like -"

"He would be angry with you. He would hate you for knowing what it felt like and not helping before."

"No!"

"Yes! Of course, you could spare him and yourself by following my

orders. All I'm asking is for you to make friends. There's nothing wrong with that."

"You'll want me to betray them."

"No, Flynn. I promise I won't ask you to do anything of the sort. Really, you have nothing to lose."

"Fine," Flynn conceded. "But I only promise to meet them."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: We're close to the ending, four chapters left until the end of the year. If you haven't voted, and would like to, polls are still open, although they will close the Thursday before the last chapter. Still got a few weeks left.\*\*

## 16. Fragile Truce

**\*\*Fragile Truce\*\***

The days passed quickly after Hiccup's birthday. Jack would have liked to spend more time with Hiccup, or even Flynn, but all of them soon became buried under mountains of homework. Still, they got together when they could.

The empty classroom became their headquarters. While Jack and Hiccup frequented it the most, Rapunzel and Merida spent some time there as well.

Rapunzel took over maintenance of the room. Every time Jack came back to the room it looked different, always nicer. She lined the desks neatly along one wall. Hiccup left the tarp of Berk there to cover them, Rapunzel added three more tarps, one for each wall, and it was not long before Rapunzel was painting those as well.

She painted one of the tarps like her tower, incorporating the sun motif of her kingdom wherever possible. Another tarp she painted for Merida, a very green landscape with arrows flying, and a castle, just the way Merida described Castle Dunbroch. Rapunzel wanted to paint the last tarp with images from Jack's home, but he refused to describe it to her, asking instead to paint his tarp himself.

Rapunzel left some paints in the room for Jack, but he rarely had time to work on it. Classes had become increasingly difficult and even with study partners Jack floundered a bit. Hiccup was a good teacher, but classes were now covering material he didn't already know. Rapunzel knew the material well, but couldn't really teach it, and Merida barely had the patience to learn the stuff, let alone tutor others.

Jack's best study partner was Flynn. Flynn wasn't the best teacher, but he had a better grasp on what the professors were looking for. Flynn had asked a few times if he could meet Jack's friends, but Jack was highly reluctant to bring Flynn into the group. He liked Flynn a lot, but knew Merida would hate him, as she did all Slytherins. Jack didn't mind Merida's temper, but Rapunzel would be upset if they started fighting again.

One Saturday, Jack actually managed to finish his homework with Flynn fairly early in the day. Jack stared at his completed scrolls in awe. He hadn't had any free time in almost a month. He was at a loss as to what to do with the day. Suddenly the blank tarp popped into his head.

"Well, thanks for helping. I'll see you around, Flynn."

"Wait - where are you going?" Flynn asked.

"Upstairs. I have the sudden desire to paint."

"Could I come?" Flynn asked. Jack wanted to say no, that the empty room was just for the four first years, but then Flynn tilted his head down and looked up at Jack with big round eyes. Jack couldn't refuse.

"Oh, yes, just please stop smoldering me with those eyes!" Jack said, dramatically shielding his face and turning away from Flynn before bursting into a fit of giggles.

Jack took Flynn up to the room. Jack checked the room to make sure it was empty before leading Flynn in. Jack took out the blue and white paints while Flynn lounged nearby.

Jack did not attempt to draw his home the way the others did, instead Jack painted abstract patterns, the same patterns he pictured on windows.

"What is that?" Flynn asked after Jack finished, "It looks almost like ferns, but I've never seen blue ferns before."

"It's not ferns," Jack said, adding more white. "I came up with these designs all on my own. Wouldn't it be lovely to see this painted on a window or something?"

"If it's not ferns, what is it?" Jack stopped painting and took a step back, observing his creation.

"I guess it does look a little like ferns." Jack tilted his head, "I suppose I could call it fern frost."

"Really, you're going to call it Frost? Isn't that a little braggy?"

"You're one to talk! I saw you chatting up that brunette Ravenclaw girl outside the Great Hall last week. I've never heard the word 'magnificent' used so many times in the same sentence."

"It's true, isn't it?"

"Don't tell me it worked."

"No, not exactly, but only because Clarisse had to study for a test. I'm sure my charm was working."

"Has it ever worked before?"

"No. Why does every brunette girl in this school have to have a

boyfriend? I swear, it's like they see me coming and hook up. Maybe I should give up dating. It's not working anyway."

"Why would you want to date anyhow?"

"Sometimes I forget you're only eleven."

"Twelve. My birthday was on December 21st."

The boys fell into a comfortable silence. The door creaked open and Hiccup stepped in. Jack jumped up before Hiccup could say anything.

"Hey, Hic, this is Flynn," Jack said, seeing Hiccup eye Flynn warily.

"Hi." Flynn held out his hand. After a bit of hesitation Hiccup took the older boy's hand.

"Um, hi? Why are you here?"

"Just watching Jack paint."

Hiccup noticed the newly painted tarp. "Hey, you finally got around to fixing it. It looks great." Jack smiled as Hiccup examined the painting, "What unique patterns, I've never seen anything like these before."

"So you're Hiccup," Flynn said. "Jack's told me a lot about you."

"Really, he never mentioned you."

"Guys, I'm right here," Jack inserted. Flynn continued as though Jack hadn't spoken.

"Oh, he wouldn't. I asked him not to. I like my privacy. Besides, even if he had told you, you would have assumed he was making it up. It's hard to believe someone as charming and handsome as me exists in the real world, but I assure you it's true." Flynn gave a dramatic bow and wink. Hiccup chuckled.

"Well, any friend of Jack's is a friend of mine. Even if you do have an ego the size of a Monstrous Nightmare."

"Me? An ego? I'm hurt," Flynn said in a mocking tone. "I can't help it that I was born with super human good looks."

Jack and Hiccup burst out into laughter that left them breathless. Before the conversation could continue, the door opened again. Merida stood in the doorway glaring at Flynn. He spoke before she could say anything.

"Ahem, Lady of Red, my eyes have never graced a maiden with such curly locks. It is a pleasure to make the acquaintance of such a fiery young lass. I am pleased to say—Hi." Jack and Hiccup could barely hold in their laughter. "Name's Flynn Rider. How ya doing?"

Merida's scowl deepened, "I've heard o' you. Yer a slimy

Slytherin!"

"Well, I see your temper was not exaggerated." Merida's face turned as red as her hair.

"Whyâ€|Why you!" Merida looked like she wanted to punch him.

"OK! Are we done here? Maybe we should go," Hiccup said, stepping between Merida and Flynn.

"No, you stay. I'll go. I have to study for my O.W.L's anyway. It's been fun, Jack. Nice meeting you Hiccup, Lady Gryffindor."

Flynn ducked around Merida leaving the trio alone in the room. As soon as he was gone Merida turned on Jack.

"Why on earth did ye brin' him here!" she yelled.

"Easy, we were just hanging out," Jack said taking a step back.

"I shoood hae known yooou'd be a body tae han' it' wit' slime like 'at!"

"I can't understand you."

"She said: "I should have known you'd be one to hang out with slime like that.'"

"Thanks Hiccup," Jack said before turning back to face an angry Merida. "And why shouldn't I hang out with him?"

"'Cause he's a shaan Slytherin!"

"Hiccup?"

"He's a no good Slytherin," Hiccup translated dryly.

"Newsflash, Princess: I'm a Slytherin too!"

"An' I don' like yoo' an' better. How could I lik' someone fro' your type o' family. Rotten to the core, the lot of them."

Jack and Merida glared at each other. Jack felt tears start to well in his eyes. Quickly he left the room, going back to the Slytherin common room. He wasn't truly friends with Merida, but her words still stung.

How dare she insult his family? Rapunzel got them to draw a truce for Hiccup's birthday, and the truce lasted a month and a half after it, but Merida still hated him because he was poor. That's why he didn't paint his home the way the others did, he didn't want to ruin their truce by reminding her of why she hated him. Rapunzel would be so disappointedâ€|Jack sighed...especially when she found out it was his fault for bringing Flynn.

\* \* \*

><p>"Well, that went well," Hiccup said after Jack left. "Do you always have to fight him?"<p>

"He started itâ€¦He brought-"

"No, he didn't. I admit I was surprised he brought Flynn here too, but if Jack thinks he's okay, then he's okay. I trust him."

"Then you're a fool. You can't trust Slytherins."

"And why not? I've heard the rumors too, Merida, I know they have a reputation for being muggle haters and all, but then I met some of them. Why not give them a chance?"

"I gave him a chanceâ€¦after Halloween. I thought he was different. But obviously I was wrong."

"Different from what?" Hiccup said with exasperation. "The other Slytherins? You don't know anything about them, aside from what house they're in. I don't know them either, but I trust Jack's judgment over whatever a stupid hat says."

"But-"

"No. I've had enough of you accusing Jack of being out to get you. He's not. Go ahead and be mad at him if you want, but be warned that your fights with him might lead to you losing more than one acquaintance. Good night." Hiccup left the room leaving a stunned Merida behind.

Part of her was impressed with Hiccup; she would never have thought he could stand up to her like that. Another part of her was furious. How dare Hiccup take Jack's side in all this? Was it not a gang of Slytherins who attacked her on Halloween? Hiccup hadn't been attacked, so of course he didn't think it was that bad.

Merida had not officially started the truce before Rapunzel got involved, but even before then she was trying to back off a little. After all, Jack had gone against his own house to help her get back at her attackers. That was when she started to think he was different, that maybe he didn't approve of what the rest of the house was doing. But then he had to go and bring another Slytherin in.

Now Jack probably wouldn't speak to her, and Hiccup might not either, which just left Rapunzel. Rapunzel might be mad tooâ€¦no, Rapunzel didn't get mad. Rapunzel would be sad. And it was all Jack's fault.

\* \* \*

><p>Soon classes let out for the Easter holidays. The professors piled on every bit of last minute homework they could think of; except for Professor Bunnymund. He gave no homework at all over break, and even encouraged students to take a break from studying to hunt for eggs on Easter day.<p>

Still, most students would be found quietly reviewing in pairs of two or three. There were only a few students who felt confident enough in their magic to not study, one of which was Flynn Rider.

Pitch's orders were impossible to follow. There was no way Flynn would ever be able to befriend Merida, her prejudice was just too strong. Flynn had said as much to Pitch the night before, prompting



the Professor to assign him a new task: delivering a letter.

Flynn felt nervous about delivering it. He didn't trust Pitch, there was just something creepy about the man. Even though Pitch assured him the contents of the letter were harmless, Flynn couldn't shake the feeling that something bad would happen.

Still, the memory of his first year was strong, and the fear of facing it again drove him to follow Pitch's request to give the letter to Merida, or better yet a student whom Merida would trust enough to accept it from.

Flynn climbed the stairs to the classroom the four first years had claimed. Hopefully he could just leave the letter there, it had Merida's name on it after all. Then no one would blame him for what happened next—whatever Pitch might have planned.

Unfortunately, luck was not with Flynn that day. He opened the door to the empty classroom and stopped dead in his tracks. Sitting next to the window reading a book was a girl Flynn had never seen up close before. His eyes traveled down her long blonde hair, several feet past her ankles, wound into a tight braid. He knew who she was; everyone here did. Princess Rapunzel.

Shaking off his shock, Flynn stepped into the room. Rapunzel glanced up from her book, her large green eyes warm and friendly.

"Hello?" she said with a soft smile. Flynn couldn't help but stare at her. Both Merida and Hiccup seemed very defensive about this room. He expected Rapunzel to take the same approach, at least to question why he was there, but she didn't. Instead she said, "Won't you take a seat? There's plenty of room if you'd like to study with me."

"Uh, hi. I don't really have time to study right now—I was sort of looking for Jack or Hiccup. I have a letter here for Merida. I was kinda hoping one of them could give it to her?"

"I'd be happy to do it. Merida is my best friend." Rapunzel bounced over and took the letter from Flynn before returning to her seat, "I'm sure Merida will be here sooner or later. Although she and Jack don't seem to come up here as frequently as they used to—must be studying with their friends in their own houses. I hear Jack has a really good study partner. I'm glad Jack has friends he can trust."

"How do you know he can trust his study partner?" Flynn asked cautiously.

"Why would anyone steer Jack wrong? Even Hiccup says he's trustworthy. I may not have met this Flynn Rider, but if Hiccup and Jack both trust him then I will too."

Flynn scrunched his eyes closed. He came up here prepared to fight off a fiery-tempered Merida, not trick an innocent young girl into betraying her friends. Before he could stop himself his wand was in his left hand, "Accio letter."

The letter flew out of Rapunzel's hand and back to Flynn's. Seeing her shocked face, he quickly explained, "Sorry, I've just decided

that this letter will have more meaning if it comes directly from me."

Rapunzel tilted her head, staring at his wand. He expected her to question his actions. Or ask why the letter was so important. What she said caught him completely off guard.

"Why is your wand in that hand?" she said.

"Huh?" Flynn glanced down at his left hand, "So I can cast spells?"

"But I've only ever seen people cast spells with their right hand. All the books I have on magic said to use your right hand."

"Then those books are outdated," Flynn said. "You're suppose to do it with your wand hand. I can't cast any spells with my right hand, at least without ten times the struggle. I'm left-handed."

"Left-handedâ€|" Rapunzel glanced out the window, "...Left-handed? Yesâ€|that's it! Thank you so much!"

Rapunzel jumped up and darted across the room to the door.

"Wait, where are you going?" he asked.

"I have to find Hiccup, I saw him outside," Rapunzel pecked Flynn on the cheek before she ran out the door leaving him alone in the empty classroom. Flynn walked over to the window and sank down into the chair Rapunzel had occupied. He glanced out the window. There were people down there but Flynn couldn't identify any of them.

Turning away from the window, he stared at the letter in his hand. Rapunzel was different from any girl he'd met before; he didn't want to hurt her. It's not that he wanted to hurt Jack either, but he reasoned there was nothing he was doing to Jack that Pitch couldn't do just as easilyâ€|But Rapunzel was sweet and innocent; the worst Pitch would be able to do to her was fail her in Potions.

Flynn turned the letter over and studied the scrawl on the front. Now he had a choice. He could pass it on to Merida through someone else, leave it in this room for her to findâ€|or hold onto it. The question was what to choose?

\* \* \*

><p>Rapunzel flew out of the castle heading down to the edge of the forest. Ever since the snow melted, Hiccup spent more time outside. He could often be found where the lake met the woods. He had often joked that he was searching for trolls; apparently he was missing his left sock and wanted it back.<p>

Rapunzel glanced around at the students playing outside. Hiccup wasn't among them, maybe he had wandered a bit closer to the forest. Rapunzel warily approached. She hadn't wanted to go anywhere near the forest since Jack and Merida's adventure with the scary horse, but her excitement for Hiccup drove her closer and closer until she was practically in the woods.

She started to feel nervous, would Hiccup really venture into the Dark Forest? Maybe she should go back and wait for him in the empty classroom. She was about to turn back when a shadow caught her eye. Focusing on the dark silhouette, she realized it was a shadow of a horned helmet. It had to be Hiccup. She called out to him, but the shadow moved away, deeper into the woods. With one glance back Rapunzel followed it.

She kept calling for Hiccup to stop, that she had something important to tell him, but he continued. Determinedly, she chased the shadow, but when she caught up with it, she saw it wasn't Hiccup at all, just a wild animal. With a scream Rapunzel moved away from the creature, trying to run back the way she had come. Every few feet a new shadow would pop out at her, making the girl jump and change direction. After nearly ten minutes of running, the shadows stopped popping up and scaring her. Taking a few deep breaths to calm herself Rapunzel looked around. She was deep in the woods; nothing seemed familiar. There was no castle in sight, no footprints to follow, no landmarks to help lead her back. She was lost in the woods and night was falling fast.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Don't forget to vote! Only two and a half weeks left until the polls close.\*\*

## 17. Into the Woods

\*\* Into the Woods\*\*

Merida was relaxing in Gryffindor Tower after losing a heated game of wizards' chess to one of her classmates. \_Lousy chessmen, they never do what I tell them too, s\_he thought. Claiming an empty chair by the window, Merida looked out as she tried to think up better chess strategies. Of course, she would have won the chess match if the soldiers were allowed to use their peripheral vision. Honestly, what was the point of having pieces that could only go in one direction? If she were on that board with her bow she'd be able to take out the entire other army without moving from her starting position.

As she thought, she noticed Rapunzel running outside. Where was she going? Rapunzel headed towards the forest, and much to Merida's surprise, went in. Merida watched for a moment, waiting to see Rapunzel come out again. But she didn't. As the sun sank below the horizon, Merida marched up to her room and threw open her trunk. Shifting her dresses and books, she pulled something from the bottom.

Her bow.

Strapping it over her shoulder and fishing out her quiver and arrows, Merida set off towards the forest. She remembered with vivid clarity the horse she had encountered. Hardly a week went by where she didn't have a nightmare about it. But scared as she was, she would not leave Rapunzel alone in the forest with that monster. \_Hold on Rapunzel, I'm coming.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Jack and Hiccup laughed as they climbed the stairs to the empty classroom. Both boys had been avoiding the room lately, neither wanting to have another confrontation with Merida. But Rapunzel was unaware of the recent fight, and the boys wanted to make her Easter special. So they'd hatched a plan to decorate the room tonight so they could surprise her for Easter tomorrow.<p>

They waited until sunset; Rapunzel usually retired to the Ravenclaw tower when the sun went down. The boys entered the room, but rather than finding Rapunzel or Merida there, they found Flynn.

He sat dejectedly in the dark room, the dying embers the only light, turning an envelope over in his hand. He didn't even seem to notice the younger boys entering. Jack stepped up to him.

"Flynn?" Jack asked.

"Oh. Hi," Flynn said without looking up.

"Is anything wrong? Were you looking for me or something?" Jack asked.

Flynn lifted his head looking at the boys. He focused on Hiccup.

"Did Rapunzel find you? She left a bit ago," Flynn said to Hiccup.

"I haven't seen her," Hiccup answered.

"She thought you might be outside," Flynn said as Jack glanced out the window.

"No, I haven't been-

"That looks like Merida!" Jack interrupted. "What's she doing going into the Dark Forest?"

Hiccup rushed to the window in time to see Merida's trademark hair disappearing into the woods. He looked at, Jack who seemed to share Hiccup's shock.

"There are monsters in the forest," Hiccup said.

"We have to go help Merida," Jack added. "She could run into that horse again."

Flynn looked up. Both boys wore a determined expression.

"Let's go!" Hiccup said. Flynn stared at the boys as they prepared to leave.

"Wait, you're going into the woods in the middle of the night to pursue a girl who can barely stand you?" Flynn asked Jack.

"I may not like Meridaâ€¦ but she's still my friend, and I won't let her go get herself killed like this. I care about her," Jack said. Flynn stood up and threw the letter he was holding into the fireplace.

"Did you want to come?" Hiccup asked.

"I can't, sorry. I have a very important meeting with a professor. Good luck with your rescue mission," Flynn said sincerely before the boys left.

Jack and Hiccup raced outside. After a pause they entered the forest. The terrible shadows cast by the setting sun soon melted into near pitch black darkness.

Jack took the lead, following the path into the woods. The boys called out for Merida, as loudly as they could, slowly going deeper into the forest. Hiccup took care every few feet to mark the trees so they could find their way back out. As they went on, the path disappeared completely from view.

"Should we turn back?" Hiccup asked.

"Did you see any places where the path split into two?" Jack asked as he bent down to examine something.

"No."

"And we didn't see her come outâ€¦I say we keep going. Look at this." Jack held up a very familiar red wiry hair. The boys exchanged a worried look before pressing on, continuing to call out for Merida.

Hiccup tried to emulate Gobber as he called out for the Scottish princess. Unfortunately, hard as he tried, his voice was weak, just like his body, just like his magic. Jack made a far more impressive cry yet they received no response.

They wander for quite a bit in the forest; Hiccup's constant marking of the trees the only thing keeping the boys from becoming hopelessly lost. After what seemed an eternity of walking, they heard a faint response.

Jack turned to the voice and called out again, "MERIDA!"

"Help!" came the faint reply, barely audible over the sounds of the woods. Jack and Hiccup took off after the voice, Jack running ahead shouting loudly while Hiccup lagged behind to mark the trees.

"Help!" The voice seemed louder now. They were close. But something about the voice seemed odd. It lacked Merida's distinct Scottish accent.

"Help!" the voice said again, this time Hiccup recognized the tone.

"RAPUNZEL!?" he shouted. "HOLD ON!"

Jack and Hiccup took off in the direction of her voice. Jack outpaced Hiccup by several yards, soon he would be out of sight. Just as Jack disappeared behind a clump of trees, Hiccup heard him cry out in an aggravated yell.

Putting on a burst of speed he didn't know he could, Hiccup caught up

to Jack, or rather where Jack should have been. Instead of finding the boy, Hiccup found himself at the edge of a large pit.

"Jack?!" Hiccup called down the pit. He couldn't see a thing.

"I'm okay. My ankle hurts like hell, though. I think I twisted it. I'll be fine. Go find Rapunzel. I'll work on getting out of here."

"Are you sure? Maybe I should lower a vine or something?" Hiccup didn't see any vines immediately so he started pulling on tree limbs, trying to break one off for Jack.

"No! Just go!" Jack called as another faint call for help came from Rapunzel. Biting his lip, Hiccup set off towards Rapunzel, leaving Jack trapped in the chasm.

\* \* \*

><p>Merida spun around quickly, her bow taut with an arrow drawn, as a branch cracked behind her. Nothing there. Not relaxing her bow, Merida continued into the forest.<p>

When she started following Rapunzel her mission seemed so clear. Find the blonde and get them both out of the forest before the evil sandy horses attacked. Somehow the task seemed simple. How hard could it be to find a girl with hair so long and such a vivid gold? But as soon as Merida entered the forest she discover finding a lone human in these dark woods was very hard indeed.

The farther she searched, the less confident she felt about finding Rapunzel, and soon she began to worry that even if she managed to find Rapunzel, she wouldn't be able to get them out. If only she were in her own forest, near Castle Dunbroch. She knew those woods well.

Another suspicious sound drew her attention. Slowly she backed up; all of a sudden she heard clip clops. Her fear spiked. \_Please be a unicorn or centaur, and not that horse, \_she thought.

The clip clops drew nearer. With a glance over her shoulder Merida turned and fled deeper into the woods until she couldn't hear the nightmarish hoof beats.

As soon as she was sure she was alone she stopped and panted, keeping her arrow ready to strike. When she caught her breath she looked around. This clearing seemed strangely familiar. Merida focused her eyes as she walked around the spot.

She stopped suddenly as her foot brushed something very familiar. Bending down she picked up a broken stick, one end curved in almost a G shape. Half of Jack's broom. This must be the clearing they crashed into during that first month of school.

Suddenly she heard a very faint cry for help. It must be Rapunzel. Merida hooked the curve of the stick over her shoulder and set off towards the voice.

After a while of walking she heard another noise, a closer noise, a boy's yell for help. She took off in the direction of the boy's

voice.

The boy's cries grew louder, letting her know she was heading in the right direction. As it reached an almost ear splitting sound she saw the reason. The cries came from a large chasm and standing directly over the chasm was a large black sandy horse. Merida pulled back and loosed her arrow. The second her arrow hit the horse it dissolved into black sand. As soon as Merida was positive it wasn't going to reform she raced to the edge of the pit. It was pitch black down there, but she could hear ragged breathing.

"Oi! Are you alright down there?" she called.

"Merida?!" Jack Frost's voice replied.

"Aye. What are you doin' down there? This is no place to play, Jack."

"Well duh! It's not like I wanted to fall into a hole and be attacked by a crazy horse. Oh my god! THE HORSE! Is it still up there?"

"The horse is gone. Disintegrated by my arrow. I told you it wasn't a real horse," Merida scoffed. Jack breathed out a sigh.

"I sure hope that was the only one. When that horse showed up I thought I was a goner. Trapped in this pit, unable to get away from it."

"Hold on, I might have just the thing." Merida set her bow down and lowered the half broom into the pit, curved end down, "Can you reach this?"

"I can't see anything. What is it?" he called back. "I don't feel anything but dirt."

"Too short, I suppose," Merida pulled the stick back up. "Can you feel any tree roots? Maybe you could pull yourself up?"

"Noâ€|and even if I could find a tree root I doubt it'd do me any good. My right ankle hurts real bad. I don't think I'll be able to climb up."

"Wait there, I'll go look for something longer," Merida started to stand up.

"NO!" Jack shouted, "Pleaseâ€|please, stay with me? I don't want to be alone anymore."

Merida heard a small sob escape from the chasm. Slowly she sat down on the edge of the pit, "Alright, Jack. I won't leave. I'm here."

"Hey Merida?"

"Yes?"

"Thanks."

She smiled softly, glad that Jack couldn't see her. She wouldn't want him to start thinking she liked him or anything.

\* \* \*

><p>By the time Rapunzel was found by Hiccup, she felt like she'd been walking for ages. The shadows still scared her, but she was glad Hiccup was with her. As soon as she stopped sobbing the two started to follow the marked trees back to where Hiccup left Jack.<p>

At first they took their time, careful not to stumble into another pit or miss a mark, but then they heard the most awful yell. It sounded like Jack. The two raced on in the direction of the noise, which was still quite a bit away, and by the time they got there, Merida had found Jack. So now the three students stood around the chasm, trying to figure out how to get their comrade out.

"We could build a ladder?" Rapunzel suggested.

"Tha'll take too long!" Merida snapped. "It'd be faster just to go an' get an adult."

"I don't think so," Hiccup said with a quiver of fear in his voice. "When Jack fell in, I stopped marking trees when I ran to make sure he was okay. I'm not sure where that last marked tree is. Hopefully we can still find it, but it won't be fast."

"Great! We're stranded in the middle of the woods all because you had to go and fall in!" Merida shouted.

"Hey! I'm not the one who went in the woods first, MERIDA!" Jack called back up. "If you hadn't pulled this little 'I'm an adventurer' stunt we wouldn't be here."

"I was following Rapunzel!"

"Ra-Rapunzel?" Jack said. "What were you doing in the forest?"

"Wellâ€¦I thought I was following Hiccup, but I guess it was my imagination." Rapunzel shrugged nervously, twisting her braid. Hiccup gave her a strange look before his eyes popped open.

"Rapunzel! That's it. Rapunzel, let down your hair!" Hiccup shouted.

"Wh..what?" Rapunzel asked, her fingers playing with her braid.

"Your hair, you told me when we first met that it was over forty feet long and still growing. I doubt that pit is forty feet deep. Let it down so Jack can climb up."

Rapunzel paused for a moment. Mother didn't want anyone else touching her hair, she was afraid it might lead to them figuring out its secretâ€¦but Jack was her friend and he needed her help.

"Alright, but you'll have to help." Rapunzel pulled off the various ties that kept her hair in place and started to undo it. As soon as they realized where the braid started, Hiccup and Merida joined in trying to undo the braid. They wound the hair all around having to stop and go back every once in a while to untangle a knot they



created by accident. It seemed to take forever, Rapunzel's hair went on and on, but eventually the braid was completely undone.

Rapunzel lowered her lengthy locks into the pit and as soon as the children were sure Jack had a good hold of it, Hiccup and Merida pulled Jack up. After Jack was out, the group looked at his ankle.

It was horrible, a huge purple bruise surrounding the bone, bent at a funny angle, swollen to twice its normal size. He tried to laugh but the pain was evident on Jack's face. Rapunzel ran a hand through her hair. She could fix it. She could make all his pain disappear—but Mother had made her promise not to tell anyone, and Rapunzel never broke a promise.

Rapunzel bit her lip as she thought about this dilemma, but before she could come to a conclusion, she was snapped out of her thoughts by something within the shadows moving. The four students huddled together, Merida drawing her bow; Jack, Hiccup and Rapunzel drawing their wands. Out from the shadows stepped the strangest horse Rapunzel had ever seen. At first glance it looked like a thestral without wings, but Merida's and Jack's cries of fear announced it as the creepy horse they ran into before.

Another sound came from behind the group. They whipped around to see another creepy horse—followed by another, and another, and another, until they were completely surrounded.

## 18. Explanation and Escape

### **\*\*Explanation and Escape\*\***

Unaware of the foursomes' current predicament, Flynn Rider charged down to the Potions dungeon. Bravely he walked past the shifting shadows as he made his way to Professor Black's office. Flinging open the door Flynn found Professor Black facing a wall, seeming to converse with a strangely shaped shadow.

"Hey!" Flynn shouted. The Professor didn't seem to hear. Flynn continued, "I'm not going to help you hurt those kids anymore."

Pitch still didn't respond, his concentration entirely on the shadow. Flynn twitched a little. He should leave. He knew he should, and yet he didn't. Something drove him to carry on, demanding an answer.

"And if you do persist in hurting them, I'll tell Headmaster Ombric!" Though Flynn shouted the last word, his bravado failed him as the shadow Pitch was talking to darted off the wall and wrapped itself around Flynn, holding him in place.

"That's a shame, Fitzherbert—it really is," Pitch said with a sad smile.

"Hey! Let me go!"

"Now why would I do that? So you can rush off to tell my archenemy about a vendetta I have against a few children?" Pitch stated

circling Flynn, "No. You won't be telling anyone anything."

"The headmaster is your archenemy?" Flynn knew he should be more concerned with what Pitch planned to do with him, but he couldn't stifle his curiosity.

"Of course! Even before we came to Hogwarts that dolt was always trying to teach others how to defeat me and my army. They actually managed to win a few battles. When he left Santoff Claussen to come work here I realized he was trying to get new recruits to fight me, especially after he employed those idiotic allies of his, Toothiana, and Bunnymund; he even got Manny Lunanoff to come down from the moon. I changed my name and applied for a position here. I became head of Slytherin house, hoping to gain supporters. I even enlisted my daughter's help, though so far she hasn't been useful, preferring to remain neutral."

"So you're in a raging battle with the other teachers," Flynn said hoping to stall Pitch. "So what does that have to do with those kids?"

"My army of humans was not enough. I picked up a few Slytherin students, but most of them did not follow the call and went on to lead normal lives. So I've been building up a different army, in the woods. Jack Frost and the Gryffindor girl stumbled upon it early in the year. I knew the children didn't know what it meant, but I was most concerned that Merida would mention it in passing to her head of house, and Bunnymund would know what it meant. I've been wasting all my energy giving her nightmares about the damn things to keep her silent. I spent time teaching the Slytherin first years hexes and curses to use on her. It took nearly two months, but it would be worth it if they could kill her. Unfortunately, they ruined it by attacking Jack first. I did not realize the boy knew so many counter curses, or that he had a special power."

"He has a special power?" Flynn asked struggling to escape the shadow.

"Yes, I saw it right before Obliviating Derek's mind. At first I thought it was a special jinx or hex, which is why I set you to find out who taught him such things besides the teachers, but when I realized the Viking squib would not be able to teach such advanced magic I figured it was a specialty of Jack's, most likely caused by genetics."

"You discovered this on Halloween, but you waited until Christmas to ask me."

"Yes, it was not until shortly before Christmas break that I intercepted a letter Jack wrote and discovered that he had a tutor, up until that point I assumed he learned the curses from a book, so I denied him access to the library under the ruse that he was being punished for pranking his fellow students. I was hoping he would find the punishment so horrible he might try to stick the blame on Merida. Then I would have cause to ask for her expellment before she could talk about what she'd seen. Unfortunately my plan didn't work. And yet here I stand, those children are about to be out of my hair, even if you refused to give the princess her letter."

"What? I knew that letter was evil."

"Quite so. It would have killed her. But that doesn't matter now. She and her friends will die anyway."

"How?"

"My Nightmares, of course. Those children wandered into the forest all on their own, once they were inside, all I had to do was mess with the shadows a bit to get them moving in the right direction. Their fear is doing the rest. And the best part isâ€¦there won't be any sticky bodies left to clean up."

"You monster!" Flynn spat.

"Now that just leaves youâ€¦but I don't think I have to kill you, Eugene. No, I think I know just what to do with you."

\* \* \*

><p>Jack sat with his three friends surrounding him. He would love to be standing too, but there was no way his ankle would support his weight. If it weren't for the fear of the horses surrounding them, Jack knew he would be in considerably more pain, but the adrenaline kept him focused on more important things.<p>

His wand out and at the ready, Jack wished he knew a spell to chase the horses away. Merida fired arrow after arrow at them, each one destroying a horse, and yet for every horse she destroyed another two seemed to come out of the trees. Soon Merida ran out of arrows.

A horse charged; Rapunzel, Merida and Hiccup jumped out of the way. Jack tried to, but its hoof clipped his right hand, knocking his wand away, into the pit he had just climbed out of.

Jack gave a cry as another horse stepped on his already injured foot. Merida quickly pulled her wand from her pocket, but rather than cast a spell, she put it in her bow and fired, destroying the horse attacking Jack, but losing her wand in the process. The three students ran back to Jack. Rapunzel knelt down beside him.

"I promised not to tellâ€¦Mother never said I couldn't show," Rapunzel whispered to herself. She put her loose hair on Jack's leg, and to the astonishment of the students, began to sing quickly.

"Flower gleam and glow." As she sang, her hair started to glow. Jack nearly jumped in shock. To his astonishment, the horses backed off too.

"Let your power shine." The glow snaked down her hair, driving the horses further back.

"Make the clock reverse; bring back what once was mine." Hiccup and Merida, seeing what was happening, grabbed the hair and wrapped it in a circle around the four students as a barrier between the horses and themselves.

"Heal what has been hurt, change the fates' design." Jack's pain started to ebb away. He glanced down at his foot, wrapped in hair. It didn't feel broken anymore.

"Save what has been lost, Bring back what once was mine, what once was mine." After she concluded the song her hair stopped glowing, and his wound felt completely healed. Pushing the hair off, he saw that his leg was back to normal. Gently he stood, no problems.

"Hey, Rapunzel," Hiccup said. "Do you think you can do that again?"

Hiccup was warily eyeing the horses, advancing again now that the light was gone. Rapunzel nodded and started to sing again, slower this time. The horses backed off immediately. Jack, Merida and Hiccup huddled in the circle of hair, using the brief respite to come up with a plan.

"Alright, so what do we have?" Hiccup asked.

"I have a bow, an' half of Jack's broom," Merida volunteered.

"Half of my broom? I wonder if it can still fly?" Jack asked taking the stick Merida offered him.

"Even if it could, you'd never be able to fly high enough to get us all out."

"Don't bet on it. I've bin watchin' Jack during our flyin' lessons, I've ne'er seen anyone who could fly so high. It's like he's one with the wind."

"Thanks. So, Hiccup, any chance that it'll fly?"

"Why are you asking me?" Hiccup said, examining the broom.

"Duh, 'cause you're the only one of us who grew up with wizard parents," Jack said. Merida turned and stared at Jack.

"You mean to tell me you aren't a pure blood?"

"Me? You thought I was a pure blood?" Jack began to laugh.

"You don't have to laugh about everything," Merida snapped. "You sure looked like a rich stuck up pure blood."

"Rich?! Oh and all this time I thought you hated me 'cause I was dirt poor." Jack wouldn't stop laughing. Rapunzel's song finished, but the horses did not approach again. Whatever these creatures were, they didn't seem to like light or laughter.

When Rapunzel started to sing again, Jack stopped laughing. Turning back to Hiccup and Merida he continued, "So Hiccup, any chance about this broom?"

"Theoretically, yes. It should work if we can fix it, but that would require having the other half."

"Great. So how do we get th' other half?" Merida asked.

"I know the summoning spell. I could teach you."

"We both lost our wands," Jack said. "You have to cast it."

"I can't. I'm a squib." Hiccup's shoulders slumped just as Rapunzel's song ended. Jack quickly started laughing to give the girl time to catch her breath.

"You are not, Hiccup!" Rapunzel said softly. "Try casting with your left hand. Flower gleam and glow!"

"What?" Hiccup asked, but Rapunzel only nodded to him as she continued her song. Hiccup picked up his wand in his right hand.

"Everyone I've ever met used their right hand. Berk's books on magic all said to use your right hand. I didn't think it was possible to cast with your left hand."

Slowly he put his wand in his left hand, raised it up high and made the motion, "Accio Jack's broom!"

Hiccup paused staring at his hand like it was on fire. A moment later the other end of Jack's broom appeared, stopping short of hitting Hiccup. His mouth stood agape as he took the half broom.

"It worked? Oh yes! This fixes everything! I might actually pass my classes now."

"Uh, Hiccup, that's great and all, but can we focus on getting out of the woods now?" Jack said.

"Right. We'll need to repair this, let's see, maybe if we put the two pieces together?"

Jack took both pieces and shoved them as hard as he could together. Just before they connected he thought he saw a silvery hair caught between the two halves. No time to dwell on that now. Jack focused on pushing the pieces together.

He felt a coldness creep down his arms just like it had on Halloween when he threatened Derek. Suddenly he knew what to do. Hiccup kept giving instructions, casting repairing spells over the broom, but Jack focused his energy pushing the two pieces of wood together, willing them to fuse into one. He would never know if it was Hiccup's spell or his own strange new power that managed to fix the broom, but somehow the stick managed to repair itself.

"Quick, get on!" Jack shouted. Merida was the first on followed closely by Hiccup. Rapunzel hesitated; the girl was still singing, clearly too afraid to stop. Jack gently took her hand and led her to the broom, helping her sit while still singing.

The broomstick was overcrowded with three people sitting on it, so Jack stood on the side, one hand gripping the broom, before jumping into the air.

To his relief the broom followed, Rapunzel's long, loose hair acted as a counterbalance to the side Jack was hanging off of. Jack willed the broom to go higher and faster until all of Rapunzel's hair was out of the forest and she could stop singing.

Merida leaned forward and the broom shot off towards the castle. The

students landed on the Astronomy Tower, thankful that no classes would be studying the moon tonight. As soon as they landed, all four burst out into laughter.

\* \* \*

><p>"What?" Pitch demanded of his shadow, "How could four first years escape an entire army of Nightmares?"<p>

"The kids outsmarted you," Flynn stated smugly.

"Hardly. They got lucky. Though I did learn something interesting about the blonde. Perhaps I could use that piece of information to buy their silence. I must do more planning."

Pitch looked at the clock, almost midnight, "I can't do anything else tonight, Easter is in a few minutes and then that fool Bunny might see me. I suppose I shall have to let the students go, and trust that nightmares will keep them silent. Now, as for you..."

Pitch circled Flynn, reaching into Flynn's pocket and pulling out his wand. Taking the stick in his hand, Pitch brought it down over his knee snapping it in half.

"Good luck explaining to your orphanage how you managed to get expelled from Hogwarts.

"You can't expel me!"

"I am your head of house. I can do whatever I like to you," Pitch said dismissively. "No one will question my actions, and if you try to complain about anything they will assume you made it up to get back at me, that is, if you can find anyone at all to complain about me to. Happy Easter, Eugene."

With that a shadow appeared underneath Flynn and he found himself in the middle of a forest near the orphanage he lived at. They wouldn't be expecting him back for a few more months. He could go in, and try to tell someone about Pitch Black, but Pitch was right, muggles wouldn't understand, and with no wand or other magical items he had no way of contacting anyone from the wizarding world either.

With a sigh Flynn turned and walked away from the orphanage. He couldn't admit defeat to them. Maybe he could go back if he got a job? But who would hire him? Hogwarts took the last five years of his life, he didn't know how to do things the muggle way. No wand, no skills, no possessions save the clothes on his back.

He could live in the wild, becoming a woodsman. But then he thought of those poor kids. Pitch may not have won this battle, but he would try again, and Flynn was the only one who knew. It was his duty to warn people, but how? Maybe he should try to find the king? The King of Cornea was a wizard, wasn't he? And the queen a witch. How would he get their attention? Maybe, if he stole something of theirs, he could demand an audience in return.

It was well known that the Lost Princess's crown was the most valuable item in the kingdom. They were sure to want that back, maybe he could steal it, demanding an audience with the king in return. But it would be difficult. He should start smaller first, maybe try to

meet accomplices.

With determination, Flynn set off. He would become the best thief in the world, and then he could finally expose Pitch and protect those kids. With a smile dancing on his lips Flynn set off.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Only one chapter left of this story. The polls will close this Thursday. You'll find out who won next week.\*\*

\*\*Also, congratulations to Randomness and ArcAngelCrystal for figuring out why Hiccup was a squib before Rapunzel.\*\*

\*\*To Lola, I'm not sure what summer Hiccup will meet Toothless, I may change ages around a little to avoid all of their movies happening over the same summer, but when Hiccup does get Toothless, it will become part of this tale.\*\*

## 19. The End of The Year

\*\*The End of the Year\*\*

After a long healthy laugh the students entered the castle, Jack and Merida helping to carry Rapunzel's hair as they made their way back to the empty classroom. Hiccup walked ahead, still staring at his left hand, waving his wand every few feet.

"Left-handed? I can't believe I never thought of that. How did you think of it Rapunzel?"

"Forget that," Jack said. "How come your hair glows? And heals? What else can it do?"

"Yeah. Why didn' you tell us before?" Merida added.

"I'm sorry, guys," Rapunzel said. "I promised I wouldn't tell anyone. I hope Mother doesn't count this as breaking my promise."

"What this?" Jack said lightly. "Nah, you didn't break your word. You only promised not to tell, you didn't promise not to show. We merely â€| discovered it â€| and anyway, it doesn't matter because we won't tell anyone. Your secret is safe with us."

"Right," Hiccup added.

"Aye," Merida said.

"Thanksâ€|" Rapunzel said. She ran her fingers through her hair, "Guess I'm going to be spending Easter braiding my hair."

"We can help," Hiccup said. "I owe you one, after all."

Rapunzel smiled and soon the four students were braiding her hair. Even Merida, who spent ten minutes complaining about how she would never want to bind her own hair, ended up having fun during the braiding. It seemed almost impossible not too with Jack calling the shots.

By the time they finished the braid, they were so tired they fell asleep right in the empty classroom.

The next morning Jack awoke to excited shouts of children finding Easter eggs out on the Hogwarts grounds. He looked out the window. The dark forest didn't seem so dark with the bright morning sun shining down. Soon he was joined by Rapunzel. Merida and Hiccup were still sleeping, Hiccup because he was the last to fall asleep due to his excitement over casting his first spell and Merida because she always slept in when she could.

"I loved to go egg hunting with my sister," Jack said wistfully. "I hope she finds the most this year, she needs to keep the championship in the family."

"Mother never let me outside to do an egg hunt; I could sometimes see them from my window, though. Mother would bring them to me then. I incorporated some of the designs in my paintings."

"Hey?! Want to go outside and participate?" Jack said excitedly.

"Outside? I don't think I should. Mother was right; I shouldn't leave the safety of the castle."

"Are you kidding? You saved us all. That was awesome. With that kind of power I wouldn't expect you to be afraid of anything." Rapunzel laughed softly.

"And it's not like we'd be in any danger with all those professors and older students around. Let's go!"

Rapunzel nodded, and after leaving a note for Hiccup and Merida when they woke up, Jack and Rapunzel went out to hunt for Easter eggs.

\* \* \*

><p>The rest of the school year seemed to fly by. The group shared their adventure with no one, partially because they feared they wouldn't be believed and partially because it would bring up questions about Rapunzel's hair.<p>

Hiccup spent every waking hour practicing spells, delighted every time one worked. Rapunzel seemed more at ease too, now that she didn't have to bear her secret alone. Now that Jack had fixed his broom, he and Merida often played flying sports together when they weren't studying.

In June they spent a week taking the exams and then had a week off before the results came in. Though they spent the end of year feast at separate tables, they found spots where they could see each other. Hufflepuff won the house cup. Hiccup couldn't get over his shock. He told the others later that his dad might forgive him for being in Hufflepuff when he found out they won.

To his delight, Hiccup did best in Potions and Herbology . He didn't do too terribly in History, Astronomy or Transfiguration either, although his practical in Transfiguration did have several mistakes. He would have done better in Charms and Defense Against the Dark Arts if he'd had more time to practice, now that he could cast spells, but



he still passed. He did fail the flying lesson, having it only once a week amounted to only four class periods left to practice since he started using his left hand, and he was not a natural.

Rapunzel also struggled a bit with flying, as her heavy hair knocked her off balance and upset the flying pattern. But aside from that she passed all her classes with high marks, her best marks in Astronomy.

Jack, on the other hand, aced the flying, even getting extra points for being able to do trick flying like holding onto the broom with one hand. He didn't do so well on the written portions of the exams, though he was alright in the practical parts.

As for Merida, she passed everything but Potions, having forgotten to take the cauldron off the fire before adding the newts eyes. Her highest score was in Flying, followed closely by Defense Against the Dark Arts. Her other classes were fairly average, but still passing.

The year was almost over, and in the end everything had been perfect. Well, almost everything. Jack couldn't seem to find Flynn anywhere. He searched throughout the whole Slytherin Dungeon, but no one had seen him since Easter.

While focusing on finals, he figured Flynn was huddled up somewhere studying for his O.W.L.s, but now that both tests were over Jack was beginning to worry. One day, just as Jack was considering going to a professor to ask about Flynn, Professor Black stepped out of the shadows.

"You're worried about Flynn, aren't you?" he asked gently.

"I haven't seen him in agesâ€¦I think something really bad must have happened to him," Jack said.

"Do not worry, child. He was called home rather unexpectedly. Family comes first you know."

"I thought he didn't have a familyâ€¦he told me he was an orphan."

"You know, just because they aren't related doesn't make them any less of a family."

"But I didn't think he would ever leave. He loved it here."

"You have a sisterâ€¦do you not? If your parents were to come to an untimely end, would you give this up?"

"Of course, butâ€¦"

"It is the same thing with Flynn. He will not be returning next year."

"But he didn't say goodbye," Jack said softly.

"He tried to, but you were not in your room. See what comes of spending time with those outside of your house? You did not return in time. He couldn't wait any longer. Easter was his last day."

"Well, could you tell me where he is so I can send him a letter?"

"I'm afraid not, but rest assured child, if he wants to, he will always be able to send you owls here. I'm sure â€| if you really are friends ... he will not wait too long before he writes to you."

Professor Black disappeared into the shadows leaving Jack alone. Gone since Easter? Flynn had plenty of time to write to him. But he hadn't. Maybe they weren't as close as he thought. With a sad sigh Jack began packing up his belongings, trying to remember everything he had hidden at the beginning of the year.

\* \* \*

><p>The four students sat together on the train as they made their way back home.<p>

"How are you gettin' home from London?" Merida asked taking the window seat.

"Hiccup helped me get my fireplace permanently connected to the Floo Network," Jack said sitting opposite her. "Now I won't have to sit through that horrible carriage ride again. What about you?"

"Mum got a port key lined up. She'll be too busy with the triplets to meet me at the station," Merida replied. "What about you Hiccup?"

"I can't wait to get back to Berk, even if it does include a terribly long boat ride," Hiccup said. "Dad'll be so proud that I passed."

"You would have passed anyway," Jack said. "You're the smartest student in the whole school."

"Nahâ€|If I was, I would have been in Ravenclaw, right Rapunzel?" Hiccup said.

"I don't know," Rapunzel shrugged. "I'm not sure you can measure real intelligence. Certainly my house likes reading, studying, and all that, but you're much better at finding practical uses for what you learn. I remember on the train before you were telling me about all the muggle inventions you made to cope with not being able to cast spells. I doubt anyone in my house â€| maybe the entire school â€| ever bothered with making a contingency plan if their magic failed them."

Hiccup laughed a little, "Yeah, well, if they faced constant dragon attacks they would. Dragons are often immune to spells."

"I can't wait to see Berk. It sounds so fun," Jack said. "I've never seen a dragon."

"Well, I hope you don't plan to forget about me this summer," Rapunzel said. "I was hoping you could all come to my tower for my birthday this year. It'll be the first time I have friends come over."

"I'll be there. You can count on it," Jack said.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world," Hiccup added.

"Perfect, Mum'll be so happy I'm spending time with another princess she might even forget my promise tha' I'd take my princess trainin' seriously over the summer."

"Princess training?" Jack said with a laugh.

"Don't look at me. I didn't ask ta be a princess. If I coul' have me way I'd a bin an archer."

"Uhg, could you learn to speak English please!" Jack said rolling his eyes.

"Don' be ridiculous. That was English!"

"Didn't sound like it."

"Did too!"

"Did not."

"Did too." The two were quickly at each other's throats. Rapunzel leaned over to Hiccup.

"Should we do something?" she whispered.

"Nahâ€¦I never stopped Ruffnut and Tuffnut. I'm not about to stop Jack and Merida. They'll wear themselves out â€¦ eventually."

They did stop fighting eventually and the four returned to more inclusive conversation. Every so often Merida and Jack would break off to start arguing again, but it never lasted.

Soon the train pulled into the station and the students disembarked. They said their last goodbyes before they had to leave. King Fergus came to pick Merida up, Rapunzel left with Mother Gothel, Jack had his mother and sister there to greet him and, to Hiccup's delight, Stoick the Vast made the journey to pick him up so they'd be going home together.

As they watched each other leave, they shared the thought that it had truly been the most exciting journey any of them had ever been on.

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>And they all live happily ever after" â€"E<em>

"\_But we had more adventures than just that, didn't we? I mean, there are like seven years at Hogwarts\_\_" â€"J\_

"\_How should I know? I got kicked out of this story, didn't you notice? I didn't get to rejoin until Rapunzel's eighteenth birthday, remember? That was a Tangled tale." â€" E\_

"\_Well, I remember one adventure I went on! I'd be happy to never see another bear after that. I really had to be Brave\_\_." â€" M\_

"\_I kind of remember an adventure where I learned How to Train Your Dragon.\_\_\_" â€"H\_

"\_And, I remember you weren't involved in the Rise of the Guardians.\_\_\_" â€"J\_

"\_I think we're getting ahead of ourselves. Those are all great stories and important parts of our lives, but they are told in other places. I think for now, Eugene is right. We're all alive, we're all happy. This is the happily ever after to this tale.\_\_\_" â€" R\_

The End.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN: Well this is the end, but fear not. I am fast at work on year two, I won't be posting it regularly until I have the rough draft finished. There will be one chapter posted after this, which will be more of a preview for year two, similar to the snippets at the end of the Guardians of Childhood books and How to Train Your Dragon books. It will contain a link to year two. As for year two, I will be posting the first chapter with an author's note explaining that it won't be continued for a bit.\*\*

\*\*To those curious about the poll results, Hufflepuff came in first, followed closely by Ravenclaw, then Slytherin, and lastly Gryffindor.\*\*

\*\*Congratulations to Randomness and ArcAngelCrystal for figuring out Hiccup was left handed before Flynn even said anything.\*\*

\*\*Also To Lola, who asked if Hiccup gets Toothless over the third summer...I haven't decided yet. I do plan to include Toothless, but the ages everyone is when their films happen might shift a bit, to avoid having all the films occur over the same summer (Or in Jack's case, winter). \*\*

\*\*Thank you to all those who followed, favored and especially reviewed. I loved hearing your input. \*\*

## 20. Teaser

\*\*Teaser \*\*

Dear Hiccup, Merida, and Jack,

You are cordially invited to celebrate Princess Rapunzel's twelfth birthday in the Tower in the Glen. The party starts at three o'clock and will last until the lantern festival in Corena has concluded. Dinner will be provided.

-Your friend Rapunzel

\* \* \*

><p>Gothel-<p>

You know better than to keep secrets from me. I'm coming for you  
...

-Pitch Black

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Find out what happens in Year Two: The Big Four and the  
Mystery of Mother Gothel at:<strong>  
s/9841307/1/The-Big-Four-and-the-Mystery-of-Mother -Gothel

End  
file.